

Lord Shiva-Book 2

The Legend of Lord Shiva:

The Maha-Deva and The Great God

(Lord Shiva's Glories, Legends, Shiva-Puran & Upanishads)

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
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Preface

भवानीशङ्करौ वन्दे श्रद्धाविश्वासरूपिणौ । ३ ॥ याज्ञ्यां विना न पश्यन्ति सिद्धाः

स्वान्तःस्थमीश्वरम् ॥ ४ ॥

वन्दे बोधमयं नित्यं गुरुं शङ्कररूपिणम् । ५ ॥ यमाश्रितो हि वक्रोऽपि चन्द्रः सर्वत्र वन्द्यते ॥ ६ ॥

bhavānī-śaṅkarau vandē śrad'dhā-viśvāsa-rūpiṇau. 3

yābhyām vinā na paśyanti sid'dhāḥ svāntahstham-iśvaram. 4.

vandē bōdhamayaṁ nityaṁ guruṁ śaṅkara-rūpiṇam. 5.

yamāśritō hi vakrō 'pi candraḥ sarvatra vandyatē. 6.

'I bow before and pay my obeisance to Bhavani (Parvati or Uma, the divine consort of Lord Shiva) and Lord Shankar (Shiva himself) who are personified forms of the divine spiritual virtues of Sradha and Vishwas (devotion and faith). Without them it is not possible even for the great ascetics and the realised ones to have a vision or experience of the Supreme Being, known as the 'Ishwar' (here meaning the pure Consciousness, the Atma, the soul), who resides on their inner-self. (3-4).

I bow before and pay my obeisance to Lord Shiva who is the universal and most realised Guru (teacher, moral preceptor and guide) for the whole world, one who is a personified form of Gyan (true form of knowledge), and is eternal and omnipresent (being the Supreme Being personified). Even the crooked (crescent) moon is praised by being associated with him. [This refers to the crescent moon present on the forehead of Lord Shiva.] {Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Shloka line nos. 3-6 at the very beginning of the holy book.}

Lord Shiva is the greatest God in the pantheon of Hindu Gods. He is honoured by the epithet 'Maha-Deva', meaning a 'Great God'. Lord Shiva is also the Third God of the Trinity who is responsible for conclusion of creation, because everything that has come

into being must end one day, so that a new beginning can be made afresh. The other two gods of the Trinity are Brahma the creator, and Vishnu the sustainer and protector of this creation.

Lord Shiva is also believed to be the greatest devotee and follower of Lord Ram, an incarnation of the Supreme Being; the divine story of Lord Ram, known as the Ramayana, is said to have been first conceptualized by Lord Shiva during his meditative session, for he remains immersed in meditation and contemplation upon Lord Ram as well as the 'Self', the pure Consciousness. For his spiritual pursuits he continuously repeats the holy name of Lord Ram as the chosen Mantra (a spiritual formula). Shiva is also deemed to be the most enlightened and wisest amongst the Gods.

The word 'Shiva' itself refers to the beauty that is eternally linked with something that is the truth, the bliss that comes with awareness of the reality, the sense of profound renunciation and detachment that comes with realizing the falsehood and the transient nature of the surrounding gross world vis-à-vis the truthfulness and the eternity of the Atma, the 'true self' that is nothing but the pure cosmic universal Consciousness. To be 'Shiva' means to be enlightened about the Absolute Truth and Reality of existence, and this obviously leads to beatitude and felicity—the 'Parmanand'.

I have prepared a three-book Trilogy in English dedicated to Lord Shiva as follows: (i) Book 1—In this book there are fourteen excellent Hymns dedicated to Lord Shiva, sourced from different scriptural texts. (ii) Book 2—This is the present book in the reader's hands; its brief details are outlined herein below. And (iii) Book 3—It describes in detail the marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati that has been elaborately narrated in Goswami Tulsidas' two classics—viz. Ram Charit Manas, and Parvati Mangal; both these two have been included in full in our narrative.

The present Book 2 of the 'Shiva Trilogy' contains four Chapters, each divided into parts as follows:

The first Chapter, Chapter 1, describes at length the many legends associated with Lord Shiva—such as the Lord's many names and the importance and significance of each one of them, the various unique symbols associated to Shiva, the Upanishadic Mantras, the concept of 'Shiva Tattva', the symbolic abode of Shiva in the body of a living being, the Shiva Loka, the significance of the south facing form of Shiva and of the Lord's famous form as Rudra which is also known as Kalagni Rudra, Rudra's Mantras, and the metaphysical concept of non-duality between Shiva and the other gods of the Trinity.

The second Chapter, Chapter 2, has the entire story of the famous 'Shiv-Puran' in simple English for ease of reading.

The third Chapter, Chapter 3, has all the wonderful Upanishads dedicated to the theme of Lord Shiva. We shall read eight Upanishads in this Chapter, five belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and three belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition.

Finally, the fourth Chapter, Chapter 4, quotes from the famous epic known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’ of Goswami Tulsidas where Lord Ram, an incarnate Supreme Being, has himself said that if one wants to attain salvation and emancipation then he must first worship Lord Shiva for the simple reason that Lord Ram himself worships Lord Shiva.

I hope this book, along with the other two that form a part of “Shiva’s Trilogy”, will be interesting to all readers of English as it brings all the numerous legends associated with Shiva at one place, making them easily accessible for everyone. Besides this, English will help to remove the barrier of language which has hitherto prevented major Indian classics from being accessed by the world at large.

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CHAPTER 1

The Legend and Glory of Lord Shiva, the Maha-Deva

In this Chapter no. 1 we shall read about many fascinating and interesting facts about the legend of Lord Shiva as they appear in the different Upanishads and the Purans etc.

1.1 Shiva—The word *Shiva* refers to the third God of the Trinity, and the one who has been assigned the task of bringing the world to an end. The word itself briefly means the eclectic, glorious and beautiful virtues of truthfulness, purity, auspiciousness, wisdom, enlightenment, erudition, sagacity, blissfulness, dispassion, detachment, holiness and divinity. These are accompanied by a high degree of peace, tranquility, serenity and their attendant happiness, joy and bliss. Since 'truthfulness and auspiciousness' are qualities that are beautiful, this word also means something that is beautiful and beyond reproach.

Briefly therefore, the word 'Shiva' means 'one who is auspicious, always pure, holy, divine, truthful, beautiful and blissful'. Shiva is the Lord who is self-realised and a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth.

The *Maho-panishad* of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 describes that Shiva was born from the forehead of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, invisible and all-inclusive gross body of Brahm, the Supreme Being.

The *Panch Brahm Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 41 espouses that Shiva lives in the heart of the creature as an embodiment of 'Sat-Chit-Anand', i.e. as his Atma—"Shiva, as Sat-Chit-Anand personified, always lives in the heart. He is a constant witness of all that is happening. That is why the heart is regarded as the doorway to liberation and deliverance from the traps that have been laid out by this delusory and cunning world of artificiality to ensnare the creature in its tentacles."

The *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition was preached by Lord Shiva himself to sage Jabal Bhusund, and it highlights the fact that Lord Shiva is no ordinary God, or even a senior one being a member of the Trinity of Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder, but is the supreme

transcendental Brahm himself personified. Shiva is the Supreme Being himself. Refer Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1; Canto 2, paragraph no. 3, 6-8.

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 92-94 says that Lord Shiva, in his form as Rudra, is the patron deity and personification of the fire element, and it is no wonder then that he is surrounded by ‘fire-spitting’ serpents as a symbolism of this fact. In this Upanishad’s verse nos. 98-102 it is asserted that Shiva is the patron deity and personification of the sky element.

The *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 8, 10, 13, 15 and 19 affirms that Shiva is invariably wrapped by serpents.

The *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes Lord Shiva as the south-facing Lord and elaborately elucidates the metaphysical significance of this form.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Brahman 4, verse no. 29 says that the Lord with three eyes (Trinetrum) is the bearer of this world having three aspects or the one who is the foundation upon which all the three Gunas such as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna rest (Trigunadhaaram) and is the one from whom the Trinity Gods (i.e. the creator Brahma, the sustainer Vishnu, and the concluder Rudra) are born. This Lord is none other than Lord Maheshwar, the great Ishwar or Lord of creation who is also known as Shiva, Ishan, Isha etc. This Lord is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm. This fact is endorsed Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 32, and in *Dakshin Murti* or *Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad*.

As the deity of the fire element, he is said to have ‘three eyes’ (*Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 93), and as the deity of the sky element he is depicted as having a moon tucked in his lock of hairs, besides having five mouths, ten arms and three eyes (*Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 100). Now let us see their significance.

The *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 4/42 says that it is Lord Ram who has manifested as ‘Maheshwar’, the great God. Since this term is conventionally applied to Lord Shiva, it follows that Shiva is actually Lord Ram in this form. Its verse no. 4/43 clearly endorses this view when it says that Lord Ram has manifested himself as Mahadev—the great God. This term ‘Maha-dev’ is also conventionally used for Lord Shiva.

The Atharva Veda’s *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Purva Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 32 emphasises that Lord Rudra or Shiva is also known as *Pashupati*. To quote—“One must understand that the knowledge of the self-illuminated *Hans* that has been revealed in this Upanishad deals with the eclectic and the divine knowledge of the pure cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma as well as Brahm.

This ‘Hans’ is also revealed in the form of Lord Rudra (Lord Shiva), who is also known as Lord Pashupati¹.

It is this Brahm that is represented by Pranav, the cosmic ethereal sound encapsulated in the word Mantra OM. It is this Pranav representing Brahm that provides one with liberation and deliverance from this mortal gross world (32).

[Note—¹Lord Shiva who has full control over his sense organs and their inherent animal-like instincts and behaviour—because he is a highly self-realised and enlightened deity who is chosen by exalted ascetics and spiritual aspirants as their patron God—is known as Pashupati, literally the Lord of animals. Since Lord Shiva tolerates no nonsense and ruthlessly overcomes the wayward tendencies of the sense organs and the mind, showing anger at them for their natural grossness and tendency to commit mischief and misdeeds,

he is also known as 'Rudra', the angry one. Lord Shiva is uncompromising and unrelenting in his pursuit of immaculacy, purity, auspiciousness, righteousness, nobility, probity and propriety, and hence called Rudra, the angry God.

'Rudra' has zero tolerance for impertinence, mischief and nonsense. 'Shiva' is, on the other hand, calm, tolerant and forgiving. Shiva always remains in a state of meditation and contemplation, a state that is depicted in his posture of blissfulness and half-closed eyes. Rudra, on the other hand, spews fire and brimstone. While Shiva symbolizes the virtues of Brahm marked by blissfulness, tranquility, calmness, wisdom, enlightenment, self-awareness and contentedness, Rudra represents the qualities of dynamism, vitality, vigour, strength and energy present in Brahm.

The question arises 'why did Shiva become Rudra (angry)?' The answer is that when Shiva found that his sense organs and mind did not allow him the peace that he sought by meditation and contemplation upon the 'Atma, the self', he became angry over them, and severely took them to task—i.e. he became 'Rudra' or angry. It is like the case of a teacher who is of a very calm nature and loves his students like they were his own sons, but when he finds that his kindness and loving nature is being misused by the students who create ruckus in the class, he has to become stern and spank them in order to restore discipline and decorum. But that does not mean that he is cruel or wishes to harm his students in the least. This same thing applies to Shiva.

Shiva becomes Rudra in order to ruthlessly punish the creatures of this creation who behave like savages or animals. This is necessary for him as he is the Supreme Being who has the mandate to maintain order and balance in this creation, and he would be failing in his moral duties and obligations if he tries to maintain a false exterior of calmness when his interior is agitated by the upheaval all around. The Supreme Being that Shiva is has an obligation to uphold positive traits and the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety in this creation even if it means that his own image of being calm and forgiving is questioned and overshadowed by anger and vehemence.

Just as the case of severe and malignant diseases like cancer and tuberculosis requiring an equally strong medicine, the evil, pervert and demonic forces of creation require an equally strong antidote to be overcome.

Therefore, that aspect of Brahm, the Supreme Being, which helps the Jiva (the living beings of this creation) control evil tendencies and negativity which make him animal-like is known as 'Pashupat Brahm', and the effort that a Jiva makes to achieve this eclectic goal is known as 'Pashu-harta Yagya'.]

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 8 says that Shiva is known as *Hans*; and Canto 1, verse no. 9 says that he is *Brahm*.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 10, 14 assert that Shiva is the creator of everything in this creation, and Canto 1, verse no. 13 says that Shiva represents the creation itself much like Brahm, the *Supreme Being* who is also treated as being an embodiment of the entire creation.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 11 says that *Shiva represents the third state of consciousness known as the Sushupta state*.

The Atharva Veda's *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 2, paragraph no. 6 asserts that Shiva and Rudra are one. The difference between the two names is due to the fact that the same Lord exists in two forms which appear to be diametrically opposite of each other in their characteristic features.

If we closely examine this verse we will understand the difference between the two terms 'Shiva' and 'Rudra' on the one hand, and between 'Brahm' and 'Shakti' on the

other hand. Lord Shiva is extremely calm, serene, self-contented, self-realised and blissful like Brahm, and is therefore regarded as a personification of the latter (i.e. of Brahm). He remains perpetually involved in doing mediation and contemplation, remaining happy and submerged in the thoughts of the transcendental Truth. Hence, he is regarded as the patron deity of ascetics who themselves are regarded as personified forms of Brahm because they have become extremely self-realised, i.e. they have experienced the truth about themselves as being the Atma which is pure consciousness. This Atma is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation known as Brahm.

When the same Shiva assumes an angry form of Rudra at the time of conclusion of creation, he shows an astonishing and an astounding level of dynamism, energy, power, strength and vigour that are synonyms of the cosmic Shakti of Brahm. It is like the case of lightening that is present in the dark rain-bearing clouds in the sky. This lightening appears suddenly, streaks across the sky and causes a huge blast of light and thunder, and if it happens to strike the earth leaves behind scorched trees and ruined buildings, only to vanish without trace in another moment in the sky, withdrawing itself into the thick bank of cloud from which it made its appearance.

This analogy of the lightening appearing from and disappearing into the clouds in the sky would explain the phenomenon of Rudra vis-à-vis Shiva, and Shakti vis-à-vis Brahm. Rudra appears momentarily from Shiva, accomplishes the task for which Shiva had to assume this ferocious and ruthless form of anger, wrath and vehemence personified, only to vanish into the calm and tranquil form of Shiva. Similarly Shakti appears from the neutral cosmic entity known as the divine Brahm, accomplishes what is expected of it, and then disappears into Brahm without trace.

Since everything in creation is a manifestation of Brahm, this unique character of Brahm and its relationship with its dynamism revealed as Shakti is also revealed in all the five primary elements of creation such as sky, air, water, fire and earth. Let us take one example of earth to understand how it works out.

The earth is the grossest of the five elements, being heaviest and most dense. It is inert and lifeless on the outside like any other celestial body of the fathomless heaven, but still it conceives and harbours all imaginable forms of life, takes proper care of them and provides endlessly for their necessities of existence. The earth is self-sufficient in this respect, and it does not need any other help to sustain life, or even to replenish its reserves which never deplete in spite of constant exploitation. So in this sense the 'earth' is Brahm personified. But when the 'mother earth' becomes angry, she vents her anger as earthquakes, landslides, floods, tsunamis, famines and draughts, leading to large scale destruction and havoc. This is the Shakti form of earth.

Then again, the earth is a solid piece of cosmic body which is lifeless, neutral and barren at one place as evidenced by the endless stretches of rocks and sand seen at some place on its surface, but at the same time it constitutes of charming and vibrant forms of endless variety of fauna and flora symbolizing life in all its splendour and grandeur at the other place. Even when the earth seems to be neutral, lifeless and inane, it still has its inherent dynamism and energy as shown by its magnetic field and its movement not only around its own self but also around the sun. This means that 'earth' stands for Brahm as well as for Brahm's Shakti simultaneously.

Likewise, if we take the example of the fire and the water, we find that on the one hand they are harbingers of life, growth and development on the one hand, and when annoyed become the cause of widespread destruction and havoc on the other hand. For instance, fire is an essential component of life because without the fire there will be no warmth and light, and the resultant chill and darkness would snuff life out of this creation. But the same fire can scorch everything to ashes if it becomes annoyed and decides to punish the world it had so benevolently nurtured.

The water also behaves in a similar fashion. While water is called the benevolent 'elixir of life' as it is the only element which actually cradles life in its merciful arms by providing it with readymade nourishment and acts as a buffer, a coolant and a soft lubricant that helps this creation to overcome the harsh and abrasive conditions on earth, which is nothing but a solid and rugged ball of thick and hardened rock that would have caused severe injury to the creation if it was not protected by the water, the same water can wipe out life if it turns malevolent as is evident during floods, high ocean tides and huge waves, tsunamis etc., or as observed during draughts when the water decides to withdraw itself and let the life parch itself out by thirst.

Air also exhibits similar characteristics. On the one hand the air is absolutely essential for life to exist in this world, because without air the life would suffocate to death, but the same air can cause ruin when it becomes angry, as is proved during fierce storms and cyclones.

The sky is the cosmic bowl which harbours everything that exists in this universe, from the smallest piece of cosmic debris to the huge galaxies and planetary systems. It is in the sky that our earth lives, and it is in the sky that the air we breathe is contained. But it is the same sky in from which devastating meteors and asteroids might strike upon the earth to wipe out entire generations of creatures. [It is one such event that had wiped out the ancient dinosaurs from the surface of earth, and more recently one such meteorite had blasted its way down to earth across the skies in the Ural Mountains of northern Russia which injured thousands of people and cause material damage to buildings and factories.]

During severe thunderstorms, hurricanes and cyclones, it is the sky that is said to 'open up' and pour rain on the earth which cause deluge, or blow fierce winds that strike out viciously any thing standing up in its path much like the swing of the Vajra of Indra, the king of Gods. It is one such deluge pouring down from the sky or heaven that is expected to wipe out the present generation at the time of doomsday. Then again, during wars, it is from the sky that rockets, missiles and arrows shower down upon armies to kill and slay mercilessly.

So we conclude that while all the elements and all the units of creation are indeed manifestations of Shiva or Brahm, the latter's life-fostering and benevolent nature is displayed in these units when they act as aids to development of life and its growth, while their destructive aspect is a representative of Rudra. The dynamism, energy, vigour, strength and abilities displayed by all the units of creation are, however, a manifestation of the Shakti in its many myriad forms.

1.2 Names of Lord Shiva and their significance—

Rudra—As the concluder of creation, Lord Shiva is known as Rudra—because then he has to assume a ruthless and angry form. The word ‘Rudra’ means anger and wrathfulness. [Refer Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 10.]

Mritunjaya—Shiva is called ‘Mritunjaya’ because he has conquered or vanquished death. [Refer Atharva Veda’s Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 1.]

Yajamahe—Shiva is called ‘Yajamahe’ because he represents the basic or fundamental Truth and Authority of creation that we offer our obeisance to. The word ‘Yajan’ means worship and honour, and ‘Mahe’ means me. So, with the combined word ‘Yajan’ and ‘Mahe’ we invoke the essential Tattwa or the basic Truth that forms the fundamental cosmic Reality and the ultimate force that is behind all aspects of this creation. Shiva represents the Absolute Truth and Reality known as the universal cosmic Consciousness of creation that is the only thing that is true, eternal, constant and steady in this otherwise transient and false world. [Refer Atharva Veda’s Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 2.]

Aghor—Shiva is also called ‘Aghor’, meaning the most fierce, terrible, formidable and an unconventional form of the Supreme Being who has an odd and mysterious existence. [Refer: Atharva Veda’s Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Purva Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 10.]

Sugandhim—Shiva is called ‘Sugandhim’ because of an aura of divinity, holiness, purity, spirituality and majesty that effuses from him and radiates in all the directions in an invisible form like the sweet fragrance of a beautiful flower. The word ‘Sugandha’ means good fragrance or a sweet and pleasant aroma. Lord Shiva is omnipresent and an omniscient Lord; his auspicious glories, magnificence and eclectic virtues are well known and famous in all the directions of this creation; the Lord radiates a divine halo wherever he is present and worshipped, and it is as invigorating and spiritually rejuvenating as the fragrance or aroma of a divine flower. Hence, the term ‘Sugandham’ is used for him. [The word ‘Sugandha’ means pleasant fragrance, sweet and attractive aroma, an enchanting scent.] [Refer Atharva Veda’s Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 3.]

Pushti-vardhan—Lord Shiva is honoured by the word ‘Pushti-vardhan’ because he creates all the worlds, sustains them, protects them, nourishes them, makes them healthy, helps in their growth and development, and enhances their glories and importance by living in all of them uniformly as he is all-pervading, all-including and all-encompassing. Hence, he is honoured by the epithet ‘Pushti-vardhan’. [Refer Atharva Veda’s Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4.]

Urvaaruk-miv Bandhanaan-mrityor-mukshi-yeti—Lord Shiva is called ‘Urvaaruk-miv Bandhanaan-mrityor-mukshi-yeti’. Just like the musk-melon is firmly attached to its stalk, a creature is also sternly clasped in the shackle of death. When he breaks free from

this vicious grip of the cycle of birth and death, he finds Mukti or final liberation and deliverance. [Lord Shiva is the most enlightened of the Gods in the pantheon. This is why he is the patron deity of ascetics and hermits. He can liberate the creature from the cycle of birth and death. He is depicted in the Purans as having his terrestrial abode in the holy city of Kashi where he gives Mukti to the dying man who is brought for cremation on the banks of the holy river Ganges.] [Refer Atharva Veda's Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 5.]

Mamritaata—Lord Shiva is called 'Mamritaata' because the worshipper attains the elixir of life that gives him eternity and imperishability. He becomes one like Lord Rudra himself. [Refer Atharva Veda's Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 6.]

Ishaan/Ishan—Lord Shiva is called 'Ishan' because he is the greatest, the most wise and exalted amongst the Gods in this creation. He is the *Isha* or the Supreme Lord of creation, and a symbol of cosmic authority and power of the Supreme Being. Hence, he is known as *Ishan*—the symbol, the icon or the emblem of the Supreme Being known as Brahm.

This term Ishan has been defined in *Atharvashir Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 4 as follows—"Why is he (Brahm in the form of Rudra) known as 'Ishan' (literally meaning the 'Lord' and his 'insignia or authority')? It is because he (Rudra) has full control over all the Gods and their powers and authority. Ishan signifies the Lord's overriding authority and complete control over all the aspects of creation that are individually controlled by these Gods who actually act on behalf of Rudra representing the dynamic form of Brahm. These Gods are nothing but the different forces of Nature personified.

It is you who controls this entire creation as Indra, the king of Gods as well as the organs of the creature's body over which these Gods rule. That is also why you are called 'Ishan'."

According to *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 4, verse no. 38-39, Ishan is one of the ten Dikpaals/Digpaals or the custodians of the celestial world. He takes care of the 'Ishan Kone' or the North-East direction. His weapon is 'Shul' or a sharp spear or lancet or a trident.

Maheshwar/Maha-deva—References: (i) Atharva Veda = Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 34; Atharvashir Upanishad, Kandika 4; Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 1.

Lord Shiva is considered as the most exalted and wisest amongst the Gods, and is therefore honoured with the epithet *Maha Deva* or the Great God, and *Maheshwar* or the Great Ishwar as he is regarded as the supreme Lord of the entire creation. [Refer: Atharva Veda's Atharvashir Upanishad, Kandika 4; and Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 1.]

The Sharav Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, verse no. 34, says that Shiva is *Maheshwar* as he is the Lord who provides Mukti or liberation and deliverance to the creature from the formidable snare that traps the latter in this gross world, helping the creature to break free from the tormenting cycle of birth and death which is very difficult to break free from.

In his form as the liberator of the soul of the creature by destroying the latter's gross external body and freeing the soul, he is known as *Sharav*. Shiva had assumed this form to liberate Lord Vishnu from the horrible body of Nrisingh (half man and half lion). [Refer Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 6-8.]

'Maheshwar' or 'Maha-Deva' are both names of Lord Shiva. The term 'Maheshwar' means the 'Great Ishwar or Lord', while the term 'Maha-deva' means the 'Great God'. Obviously, they both mean the same.

However, the term 'Maheshwar' has been defined independently in *Atharvashir Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 4 as follows—"Why are you (Rudra as a manifestation of Brahm) called 'Maheshwar' (literally meaning 'the great Lord')? It is because you show your benevolence and grace upon those devotees who worship you selflessly in order to attain Gyan or true knowledge. [As the greatest teacher and preacher in creation, it is you who can only give the knowledge of Truth. This knowledge is known only to you. Hence, you are great amongst even the Gods who are supposed to be wiser and more knowledgeable than ordinary mortals.] It is you who empowers the faculty of speech to speak and express this Truth. You have forsaken all sorts of delusions and overcome all ignorance, and instead remain steady and unwavering in the knowledge of Truth that you have acquired. You are self realised and most wise and enlightened. This gives you immense fame and honour; it establishes you as the greatest enlightened one in creation. This is why you are called Maheshwar.

This is how the divine characters and virtues of Rudra have been outlined here in this Upanishad."

In the Bhasma Jabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph no. 1, Lord Shiva has been addressed as *Maha-deva*, and it explains *why* it is so as follows—"Since he is extremely enlightened, self-realised and Brahm-realised, he stays in the fourth state of Turiya. [This is the transcendental state of existence in which the ascetic lives in a state of trance. He is so deeply submerged in meditation and contemplation that he is not even aware of his body and what it does, and therefore there is no question of his being aware of the surrounding material world and its temptations. Hence, he is free from all corruptions and delusions that mire an ordinary soul.]

This fourth state is a representative of the Supreme Being who is beyond the Trinity Gods known as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder. Hence, the Lord who stays in this eclectic and sublime state of Consciousness is known as 'Maha-Dev', the great Lord. [This fact has been expressly emphasized in the Pashupat Upanishad, Purva Kand, verse no. 10, which is the nineteenth Upanishad of the Atharva Veda.]

The Bhasma Jabal Upanishad gives the Tarak Mantra of Lord Shiva as 'OM Namaha Maha-devaaye' in paragraph no. 4 of the same Canto 2.

Shambhu—He is known as *Shambhu* as he is the one who remains uniform, unruffled and calm even under adverse situations. Shambhu is one who exists or is established in an enlightened state of highest consciousness (i.e. is 'Bhu') that is marked by perfect self control, complete neutrality, absolute tranquility, serenity, peacefulness and blissfulness. Since Lord Shiva possesses all these grand auspicious virtues, he is called 'Shambhu'. Refer: Atharvashikha Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Kandika 3.

This Upanishad declares that Shambhu is the highest deity to be worshipped and adored, and he represents the fifth state of consciousness that is called the Turiyateet, and to the fourth aspect of the ethereal word OM—i.e. when the word has been said fully and the mouth closes. The first letter of OM is A and it represents Brahma the creator, the second letter U represents Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, the third letter M represents Rudra the annihilator and one of the names of Shiva, and the three and half letter called the ‘Ardha Matra’ represented by the horizontal ‘S’ mark attached to the symbol of OM on its side represents Ishan, one of the names of Shiva and the God who is the ruler of all other Gods. Finally, the fourth complete Matra symbolised by the dot on the top is Shambhu or Lord Shiva. This Shambhu or Shiva is Brahm in its best and most pristine form.

Lord Shiva is called Shambhu because he possesses the highest knowledge of the ‘truth and the Consciousness’ known as Brahm, and being self-realised he is a personified form of Brahm. Therefore, Shambhu is the supreme transcendental Lord of creation who surpasses all earlier states of existence such as the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or dreaming state, the Shshupta or deep sleep state and the Turiya or post-Sushupta state to permanently live in the Turiyateet state of perpetual bliss and tranquility.

The Atharva Veda’s *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 2, paragraph no. 18 says that Lord Shiva who is known as Shambhu is also known as Pashupaat and Maha-deva.

Laya-kaari—Lord Shiva brings about an end to delusions, and establish oneness and uniformity in creation by removing or eliminating or dissolving (‘Laya’) the artificial distinction in the various states of Consciousness (such as the Jagrat, Swapna, Sushupta, Turiya) that are caused by ignorance of the reality and its attendant delusions.

Pashupati/Pashupaat—References: (i) Atharva Veda = Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 8, 18; Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 14; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Purva Kanda/Canto 1, verse nos. 10-11, 29, 32; Uttar Kand/Canto 2, verse no. 7. (ii) Sam Veda = Jabalu-panishad, verse nos. 11-18.

Shiva is called *Pashupati* or *Pashupaat* because he is the Lord of lowly living beings who have animal-like instincts—i.e. those who are engrossed in pursuing the urge for self-gratification and pleasures of the sense objects of this gross world without realizing that they getting sucked in the vortex of endless miseries and being pulled away from peace and happiness.

The *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph no. 8 explains the meaning of this term as follows—“Anyone who knows and understands these eclectic virtues of my (Shiva’s) divine cosmic form (as Brahm, the Supreme Being) is freed from the fetters that shackle him to this material world like an animal held in captivity.

I (Shiva) am known as ‘Pashupaat’—one who liberates animals from their shackles; it also means freeing a living being from his animal-like lowly instincts that demean the exalted nature of his Atma. [Here, the ‘animal’ refers to the Jiva, the living being or the creature, and the ‘shackle’ to (i) the never ending cycle of birth and death, (ii) to the numerous temptations of this mundane artificial and deluding material world of sense objects, and (iii) to the evil and lowly natural instincts that may exist in the Jiva that would undermine the holiness and divinity of his Atma. The Lord ensures that such lowly

traits in his character are eliminated for good so that the creature can find liberation and deliverance, or emancipation and salvation.] [8]”

The *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 14 says—“All the Gods are like animals in front of him. That is, all the Gods are under his overall command and depend upon him for their survival and protection. That is why the Lord is honoured by the epithet ‘Pashupatinath’ or the Lord of animals.’

Refer also *Jabalu-panishad* of Sam Veda tradition, verse nos. 11-18.

Ahankar, or pride and ego, makes a man no less than an animal. This is stressed in *Jabalu-panishad* of Sam Veda tradition, verse nos. 11-18, and *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 14 which stresses that ‘Isha’, or the Lord Shiva who is regarded as the supreme Lord of creation, had to become a ‘Pashupati’, Lord of animals, just because he is the undisputed Lord of all the creatures, and those creatures who have lost wisdom and a sense of righteousness, those who are overcome with Ahankar, are no better than animals.

When the ‘Ahankar’ is eliminated or symbolically reduced to ashes, the creature becomes an ‘Ish’ from a ‘Pashupati’; in other words he has become a purified creature in the place of an animal-like creature. This transformation or metamorphosis—from an animal to a non-animal or from an animal-like creature to a wise and erudite person—is tantamount to acquiring truthful knowledge and become spiritually wise and enlightened.

The Lord is especially honoured by the epithet of ‘Pashupati’ because an enlightened worshipper targets all his spiritual endeavours towards attaining high levels of purity and holiness that entails that he first controls his basic animal-like natural instincts; he is expected to have completely exercised total self-restraint on his sense organs. Brahm is not sitting somewhere in the sky, but the Lord resides inside one’s own inner-self as his Atma. This Atma is the Lord of the creature. So when a worshipper pays his obeisance to ‘Pashupati Parmatma’ he is actually honouring the Atma which has learnt to practice exemplary self-control over animal-like instincts, characters, qualities and behaviour.

Tripurari/Tripuraari—Refer (i) Atharva Veda = *Sharav Upanishad*, verse no. 14.

The *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 14 describes that Lord Shiva is also known as the slayer of the demon Tirpurasur. Hence, Shiva or Rudra is also called Tripurari. This is because of the following legend associated with the Lord. Tarakaasur was the son of Vajraanga and his consort Varaangi. He had done severe Tapa (austerity and penance) as a result of which the creator Brahma had granted him several boons which had made him invincible. He was killed by Lord Subramanya, the son of Shiva and Parvati. He had three sons—Taaraaksha, Kamlaaksha and Vidyunmaali. They had also pleased Brahma and by his blessings built three great cities, collectively called ‘Tripura’. These cities were made of gold, silver and iron. When they became a nuisance for the Gods, Shiva destroyed these three cities and the demons with one arrow. These three demon brothers are collectively called *Tripuraasur*. Therefore he got the name of Tripurari—one who destroyed the three enemy cities.

Kamari/Kaamaari—Lord Shiva is also known as Kaamaari or Kamari, literally the one who had reduced to ashes the pride of Kaamdeo, the God of passions and lust. The Lord had vanquished the haughtiness and arrogance of this God of passions and his belief that

he is invincible and infallible. This fact has been stated in the *Sharav Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, verse no. 15, which says that Lord Shiva had subdued even the God of Death known as Yam and the God of passions known as Kamdeo cupid. Hence, he is known as ‘Kamari/Kaamaari’—the Lord who had killed or conquered Kaam, the negative quality of having passions, lust, yearnings and longings; the desire for gratification of the natural carnal instincts in a living being; longing for sensual pleasures.

The legend associated with this event is briefly as follows—“Once when Shiva was in deep meditative trance and was teased by Kamdeo, the God of passions, at the behest of Gods who had wanted Shiva to marry and produce a male child who would kill the demons, he felt so annoyed by Kamdeo’s impertinence that he opened this third eye to burn him down.”

The story of Shiva subduing Yam has been narrated in the Purans as follows—“Shiva had trounced *Yam*, the God of death, to save his devotee Maarkandeya. Sage Maarkandey was the son of sage Maarkandu. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, the patron God of death, so much so that when death approached him personified as Kaal when the sage was yet quite young because destiny had it that he would die still when young, he clung to the Shiva Lingam (the image of Shiva) with the greatest of devotion, surrender and urgency that comes with one facing certain death. Lord Shiva appeared and prevented Yam, the God of death from tying him in his snare and taking him away. The Lord blessed him with a virtual eternal life, blessing him that he would live for another 14 Kalpas (1 Kalpa = 1 day of Brahma or roughly 4.32 billion human years). His magnum opus is the ‘Maarkandey Puran’. He had also edited and abridged the Manusmriti, the code of life and conduct as laid by the first human named Manu to regulate society and act as a constitution and manual for ready reference for the forthcoming human race, into eight thousand verses, and passed it to sage Bhargava. His reference comes in the Mahabharat epic when he approaches the Pandavas and taught them the principles of Dharma (code of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and nobility). He was the one who had enlightened Yudisthira that Krishna was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu (Vanapurva, 189). In the same Mahabharat, he preaches the celestial sage Narad the laws of Dharma (Anushaasan-purva, 50-62).”

Parmeshwar—The word means the Supreme Ishwar or the Supreme Lord. Lord Shiva is addressed with this honourable epithet in the Atharva Veda’s *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph no. 3.

Trinetrum/Trinetra/Trilaksha/Lalaataksha—

Refer (i) Atharva Veda = Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 6; and Canto 2, paragraph no. 21; Sharav Upanishad, verse nos. 10, 14; Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-2; (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 93.

The word *Trinetra* means the Lord who has three eyes, two conventional eyes and one rare eye of wisdom located in the center of the forehead, between the eyebrows and just above the root of the nose. Hence, Lord Shiva is also known as Lord *Trinetrum*. [‘Tri’ = three; ‘Netra’ = eyes; ‘Laksha’ = to see.]

The location of the third eye in the center of the forehead has given Shiva the name of *Lalaataksha*. [‘Lalaat’ = forehead.]

The *third eye* is not some physical eye but a subtle eye symbolising the Lord's high level of enlightenment and wisdom. This burning of the evil world by opening of the third eye of Shiva is a metaphoric way of saying that a creature can use his eyes of wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment to overcome all delusions and misconceptions about the truth and reality, along with all mischief as well as negativity and evil tendencies in this world. The 'burning' is elimination of such negativity and perversions.

According to Yoga philosophy, an ascetic focuses his Pran or vital winds at this spot in the forehead where he experiences enlightenment and the nectar of bliss dripping from it. By the way, Shiva is regarded as the patron God of all ascetics precisely for this reason.

There is a legendary story associated with this third eye. Once, Parvati, his divine consort, had closed his two eyes, and as a result the world was plunged in darkness. To save the world from this all-encompassing darkness, Shiva willed a third eye between the two eyebrows. This eye spouted fire with its accompanying heat and light. So, the celestial sun can be regarded as a symbol of this third eye.

Once when Shiva was in deep meditative trance and was teased by Kamdeo, the God of passions, at the behest of Gods who had wanted Shiva to marry and produce a male child who would kill the demons, he felt so annoyed by Kamdeo's temerity and impertinence that he opened this third eye to burn him down.

According to the Atharva Veda's *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 2, paragraph no. 21, the three eyes of Shiva or Rudra stand for the Sun, the Moon and the Fire. These three entities are regarded as the eternal sources of light in this creation. The Sun and the Fire provide the heat and energy so essential for sustenance of life besides being an eternal source of light, while the Moon is regarded as the pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of bliss and the soothing nectar that neutralises the scorching effects of the Sun and the Fire.

The third eye, as has been noted above, stands for the excellent level of wisdom, erudition, knowledge, enlightenment and omniscience that the Lord possesses.

The *Sharav Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, verse nos. 10 and 14 says as follows—

“Verse no. 10= We bow reverentially and pay our obeisance to the great Lord known as Rudra who can burn to ashes the entire world by the fierce spurt of fire emanating from the third eye located in his forehead¹, and is so gracious that he re-creates it once again after punishing it (for its sins and misdeeds by reducing it to ashes), and then offers it his protection (10).

“Verse no. 14 = We bow reverentially and pay our obeisance to the great Lord known as Rudra whose three eyes are the Sun, the Moon and the Fire (representing eternal sources of light, life, energy, warmth and heat) (14).”

From the metaphysical perspective, his two eyes are the conventional eyes, and his third symbolises his deep insight and great wisdom and enlightenment. Shiva personifies the fire element which also has a symbolic significance. The fire is known to burn all impurities present in gold when it is put into it, thereby purifying the metal. Similarly, fire is used in blast furnaces to extract iron from its ore. Fire has the inherent ability to reduce to ashes all filth and garbage, which is a metaphoric way of saying that a person who has worshipped this element in the form of Shiva is supposed to have burnt all his faults, blemishes and shortcomings that taint his character and soul, thereby

purifying his inner self. The ash is indicative of total renunciation and detachment from the world of materialism, because it is indicative of a renunciate way of life and symbolically stands for burning of everything into the fire pit. That is why Lord Shiva has been called the patron God of ascetics, hermits and Sanyasis who worship the fire element only.

Besides these points, Shiva is the God assigned the task of concluding the world which necessitates his being closely associated with the 'fire element' in the sense that he must be as unrelenting, merciless, powerful and ferocious as the latter in order to conclude this creation inspite of all the odds. He must reduce everything to ashes just like the fire does. And it is from this ash that the new creation would emerge in due course. Herein lie the magic of creation and its chief Lord, Brahm, the Supreme Being—the fact that a new creation rises from ashes!

To quote *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 93—“This (i.e. the fire element is the symbolic abode of Lord Rudra or Shiva. [That is, he symbolises the fire element.] One should meditate upon this Lord who has three eyes, who is the one renowned for granting boons (to his followers and devotees, and in the presence case to the ascetic), who is as splendidous, illuminated and radiant as a sun which has just risen, and who has the ash of the fire sacrifice smeared all over his body (just like an ascetic, indicating that he is their great icon and patron deity of ascetics) (93).”

Trayambak—The word *Trayambak* means the Lord who has a most unconventional form with one extra eyes oddly placed in the forehead. Lord Shiva's behaviour and general bearing are also most unconventional and odd because he is at once an incarnation of the eclectic virtues of peace, renunciation, detachment, tranquility and blissful, and at another moment he becomes personified form of anger and wrath. On the one hand his cosmic form is the Supreme Being, the Greatest amongst the Gods ('Maha-deva'), and in another form he is a gross Lingam (Shiva's gross symbol made of stone). In one instance is is lost in meditation and contemplation, being completely detached from the outside world, and in another instance he is said to have a family consiting of his divine consort Parvati or Uma, the divine Mother, and sons known as Ganesh and Kartikeya. Hence, he is called *Tryambak*—the 'odd one'.

The word also means 'the Lord of the three ('Traya' = 3) worlds' consisting of the heavens, the earth and the hell; the cosmos, the terrestrial world, and the nether world.

The Lord's Mantra is given in the *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4 is entirely devoted to Lord Trayambak. It describes the meaning of this word and the Mantras dedicated to Lord Trayambak in great detail. This *Trayambak Mantra* is given in paragraph nos. 1-6, and it is 'Trayambakam Yajaamahe Sugandhim Pushti-vardhan Urvaaruk-miv Bandhanaan-mrityor-mukshi-yeti Mamritaat'.

Lord *Triyambak*'s name appears in the following Upanishads—

(i) Atharva Veda's *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph no. 6 which says that his Mantra should be said when the worshipper applies the sacred Bhasma (ash of the fire sacrifice) on his body from the toe to the head.

(ii) The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4 is entirely devoted to Lord Trayambak. It describes the meaning of this word and the Mantras dedicated to Lord Trayambak in great detail. This *Trayambak Mantra* is given in

paragraph nos. 1-6, and it is ‘Trayambakam Yajamahe Sugandhim Pushti-varadhan Urwaaruk-miv Bandhanaan-mrityor-mukshi-yeti Mamritaata’.

Let us see what it says—

“Paragraph no. 1 = The Gods asked the Lord (Shiva), ‘Oh Lord! You have expounded for us the best Gayatri Mantra dedicated to the Goddess Tripura. The hymn ‘Jatvedas’ etc. incorporates in it the eight esoteric knowledge of Tripura. Ascetics find liberation and deliverance from the shackle of death by honouring the Goddess with this Gayatri Mantra along with these eight forms of esoteric knowledge pertaining to her.

Now, please preach us the knowledge called ‘Mrityun-jay’—literally the knowledge which helps one to conquer death itself.’

Hearing this combined request of all the Gods, the Lord (Shiva) revealed the most potential and acclaimed ‘Mritunjay’ knowledge of Lord ‘Trayambak¹’ (the three-eyed God of the three worlds) that was encrypted in the form of ‘Anushtup Chanda²’. [1].

[Note—¹Trayambak—Refer Canto 1, paragraph no. 2.

²The Anushtup Chanda— The *Anushtup Chanda* is a verse with 4 lines, each line having 8 letters = total 32 letters. It was first conceived by an ancient sage named Anustuv, hence it bears his name.]

“Paragraph no. 2 = What is etymology of the term ‘Trayambak’? The Lord is called ‘Trayambak’ because he is the Lord of the three worlds. [These are the terrestrial, the heavenly and nether worlds. It also means the past world, the present world and the future world.]

Why is he ‘Yajamahe’? It is because the word ‘Yajan’ means worship and honour. So, with the combined word ‘Yajan’ and ‘Mahe’ we invoke the essential Tattwa or the basic Truth that forms the fundamental element in creation. [By extension, Lord Trayambak refers to the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm.]

The Beej Mantra ‘Kum/Kam’ that follows the word ‘Trayamb’ indicates victory over death.

Hence, the phrase ‘Trayambakam Yajamahe’ is used to offer worship and honour the Lord of the three worlds. [2].

“Paragraph no. 3 = Why is the word ‘Sugandhim’ used to worship him? The Lord is famous in all the directions, his auspicious glories and magnificent virtues are known everywhere, and they have a divine halo around them which is as invigorating and spiritually rejuvenating as the fragrance or aroma of a divine flower. Hence, the term is used for him. [The word ‘Sugandha’ means pleasant fragrance, sweet and attractive aroma, an enchanting scent.] [3].

“Paragraph no. 4 = Why is the term ‘Pushti-varadhan’ used to honour him? It is because he creates all the worlds, sustains them, protects them, nourishes them, makes them health, helps in their growth and development, and enhances their glories and importance by living in all of them uniformly as he is all-pervading, all-including and all-encompassing. Hence, he is honoured by the epithet ‘Pushti-varadhan’. [4].

“Paragraph no. 5 = Why is he called ‘Urwaaruk-miv Bandhanaan-mrityor-mukshi-yeti’? Just like the musk-melon is firmly attached to its stalk, a creature is also sternly clasped in the shackle of death. When he breaks free from this vicious grip of the cycle of birth

and death, he finds Mukti or final liberation and deliverance. [Lord Shiva is the most enlightened of the Gods in the pantheon. This is why he is the patron deity of ascetics and hermits. He can liberate the creature from the cycle of birth and death. He is depicted in the Purans as having his terrestrial abode in the holy city of Kashi where he gives Mukti to the dying man who is brought for cremation on the banks of the holy river Ganges.] [5].

“Paragraph no. 6 = Why is the word ‘Mamrita’ used during his worship? It is because the worshipper attains the elixir of life that gives him eternity and imperishability. He becomes one like Lord Rudra himself. [6].”

Neelkantha—‘The Lord with a purple or blue-tinged throat’. Lord Shiva is known as ‘Neelkanth’ because he had drunk the horrible poison called Halaahal which emerged as a scorching froth at the time of churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit or the ambrosia of life and eternity. The legend goes that Lord Shiva had drunk the fierce poison that emerged at the time of churning of the celestial ocean in the beginning of creation by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. As soon as this boiling poison came out, there was the fear of the entire creation being scalded by its heat and ferocity. So Lord Shiva took the name of Lord Ram and gulped it in one mouthful. But the Lord knew that if this poison entered his abdomen the whole creation will be annihilated nevertheless as it resided in his abdomen. This shows that Lord Shiva is none but the supreme Brahm in whose body the entire creation resides like the embryo lives in its mother’s womb. Hence, the merciful Lord kept the poison in his throat, giving it a purple colour. [Refer: (i) Sharav Upanishad, verse nos. 11, 16. (ii) Mahabharat, Adi Parva, Canto 18. In its verse no. 18 it is stated that—(a) Lord Shiva had drunk the poison while invoking and repeating the holy Mantra, and of course that Mantra was the holy name of Lord Ram because the Lord is Shiva’s patron deity, and (b) this is the reason why his throat became dark blue or purple, because he had retained the poison in his throat instead of gulping it down in his stomach. (iii) The same fact is endorsed in Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 19. (iv) Tulsidas’ Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 157-158 allude to Lord Shiva drinking the Halaahal poison.]

Nataraj—One of mystical forms of Lord Shiva is known as the ‘Nataraj’ (pronounced as ‘Nut-Raaj’). The word ‘Nat’ means to dance, and ‘Raaj’ means a king or an expert who knows the secrets of any kind of art. So, when Lord Shiva performs his cosmic dance he is known as ‘Nataraj’. This mystical form of Lord Shiva is known as the ‘Nataraj’ because it represents the Lord’s cosmic dance that symbolizes both the destruction and the creation of the universe, and it reveals the cycles of death and birth. Since one dances only when he is extremely happy and ecstatic, this Nataraj dance of Lord Shiva indicates that the Lord is extremely blissful and ecstatic in self-realisation. This pose is for the welfare of the world, and to tell the world how one enjoys total bliss upon self-realisation. In the pose of Nataraj, the ‘King of Dance Forms’, Shiva is giving darshan (divine viewing) to his beloved devotees within the abode of Consciousness, which is the heart of man. In other words, only when one becomes self-realised and experiences the

existence of the pure conscious Atma inside one's heart, inside one's inner-self, that he can dance in ecstasy, lost in bliss and oblivious of the surrounding world.

During this form of cosmic dance that is known as 'Tandav' (pronounced as 'Taan-dav'), Lord Shiva is depicted as having crushed under his feet the demon of ignorance called 'Apasmara Purusha'. This demon of ignorance is created when the creature forgets the truth and reality of his true 'self' and that of existence as a whole, and the killing of this demon stands for overcoming ignorance and its attendant delusions. One hand is stretched across his chest and points towards the uplifted foot, indicating the release from earthly bondage of the devotee. The fire represents the final destruction of creation. But since Lord Shiva is the 'Maha-Dev', the great God, he is simultaneously responsible for bringing to an end this creation as well as creating it once again.

Therefore, this dance of the Nataraj is also an act of creation whereby the Lord arouses dormant energies and scatters the ashes of the universe in a pattern that will form the design, the contours and the texture of the ensuing creation.

Sharav—In his form as the liberator of the soul of the creature by destroying the latter's gross external body and freeing the soul, he is known as *Sharav*. Shiva had assumed this form to liberate Lord Vishnu from the horrible body of Nrisingh (half man and half lion). [Refer Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 6-8.]

Lord Shiva has many other names also as follows:--

1. Aashutosh—meaning one who fulfills all wishes of his devotees instantly.
2. Bhairav—meaning the Lord of Terror.
3. Bhole-naath—meaning the Lord who is simple-hearted, unpretentious, straightforward, honest, sincere, and humble inspite of being the Lord God.
4. Bhu-Dev—meaning the Lord of the earth.
5. Devaa-dhi-dev—meaning the Lord of all the Gods; the supreme God; the primordial God; the first amongst the Gods; the God who was present before the coming into being of all the other Gods.
6. Gangaa-dhar—meaning the Lord who holds the mighty river Ganges in the lock of hairs on his head.
7. Jagdish—meaning the Lord of the world, the universe.
8. Kailash—meaning the Lord who eliminates miseries and torments, restoring peace and happiness to the creature. It also means the Lord of the sacred mountain with the same name, viz. Mt. Kailash.

1.3 Symbols associated with Lord Shiva—

Shiva Lingam/Jyotirlingam—References: The Atharva Veda's (i) Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 11-12,14 refer to the Shiva's 'Lingam' and to his 'Jyotirlingam'; (ii) Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 12.

The Atharva Veda's Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 12 gives the *names* of some of the twenty *Shiva Lingams* as follows—"Vireshwar, Rudreshwar, Ambikeshwar, Ganeshwar, Neelkanth, Gopaleshwar, Bhadreswar etc."

The *Shiva Lingam* is a gross manifestation of Shiva who himself is a divine, subtle and sublime Being. Just like the case of the rest of this creation being a visible and gross manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Supreme Being, Lord Shiva's Lingams too represents the otherwise invisible, attribute-less, cosmic, all-pervading and the most sublime Lord Shiva's subtle form in its grosser aspect or form that is visible, and has attributes like the other grosser manifestations of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. This is one of the primary reasons why Lord Shiva is also called 'Maha-deva', the Great God, because he is none other than Brahm himself.

The Shiva's Lingam is like an icon that is normally used to stand as a unique symbol for a particular deity or God. It is an emblem of Shiva. If we look at the Lingam closely we observe that it is a cylindrical structure passing through the center of a circular girdle or ring. This structure reminds one of a wheel with the central axle. This imagery is used to indicate the fact that Shiva is the supreme transcendental Brahm around whom the whole of the creation rotates. 'Rotates' is a metaphoric way of saying that the entire creation depends upon Brahm; it is centered around Brahm; Brahm is the pivot that supports the entire edifice of creation. Just like the wheel cannot move if the axle is removed, this creation cannot survive if Brahm, the Consciousness and the Truth of creation, is removed from it. The fact that this creation is like a wheel rotating around the central axle called Brahm is endorsed in a number of Upanishads, e.g. (a) Atharva Veda = Prashna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 11; Canto 6, verse no. 6; Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse no. 6; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 2-7; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 9, verse nos. 4, 6; Tripadvibhut Mahanarayan Upanishad, Canto 7, paragraph 3-14 (which describes the 'Sudarshan Chakra' of Vishnu); Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 6-7 (which describes the wheel or Chakra that is present in the navel and how it keeps the creature trapped in it); Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2 (which describes the Sri Chakra dedicated to Goddess Tripura who is regarded as the Mother Goddess; Surya Upanishad, verse no. 1 (describes the Sun God as the one who keeps the wheel of life and death, known as the Kaal Chakra, rotating). (b) Krishna Yajur Veda = Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 4, 6; Canto 5, verse no. 12; Canto 6, verse nos. 1-3. (c) Shukla Yajur Veda = Paingalopanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-4.

Besides this eclectic viewpoint we also observe that a cylinder is a smooth surface that is round from all sides. It appears the same from whichever side one sees it. This signifies the fact that Brahm is uniform and even in all respects, and neither does it have any specific form and feature. Like the Lingam passing through the circular girdle around it, the entire creation too forms a ring that moves around Brahm which holds the creation together and passes through its center. Now, this 'center' also means a core, and hence this refers to the Atma, the soul, that is the pivot or the core around which life revolves in this world.

If we look further ahead and observe a potter's wheel and how the potter moulds his pots and pans on it we find that it has a striking resemblance to the Shiva Lingam. As the wheel turns the potter expertly raises the shape of his wares at its center, and the rotating potter's wheel can be treated as an apt metaphor for the way the Shiva Lingam represents the phenomenon of creation moulded from the dynamic energy of Brahm revealed as the Shakti that continuously revolves around the principal known as Brahm.

Iconographically, the Shiva Lingam has three distinct parts—the lower part fixed to the ground stands for Brahma the creator; the middle part of the wheel stand for Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation; and the upper part of the cylinder represents Rudra the concluder. These three Trinity Gods stand for the three basic and fundamental aspects of creation—birth, development and growth, and finally the end. They thus represent Brahm in its entirety.

The Shiva Lingam is called *Jyotirlingam* because it is mentioned in the Linga Puran, Chapters 17-20 that the Shiva Lingam appeared as an endless shaft of fire. And ‘fire’ is characterized by the virtues of light and illumination. It came to be known as the ‘Linga’ because all the creatures of this creation have a gross body in which their soul or their Atma lived, called the ‘Linga Deha’, and they reproduced themselves with the help of the genitals, called the ‘Linga’. Since only the Supreme Being has this capacity to create and then sustain his creation, the grosser form of the Lord in the form of this creation and its self-replicating creatures was symbolized in the grosser symbol of the Linga. In other word, the Lingam represents the whole creation in a miniature gross form. This icon of Brahm is called ‘Shiva’ Lingam because Shiva is a personified form of Brahm.

It is also believed that it is called ‘Lingam’ because the entire creation would collapse at the end in Brahm, the ethereal cosmic Consciousness. The phrase ‘Linga Deha’ literally refers to the ethereal form of the corporal body of a creature. So when the creature sheds the body, his Atma would merge with the cosmic Atma known as Parmatma. Since Lord Shiva is the Parmatma—the Supreme Being—of this creation, it is natural that his symbol would be called a Lingam. It is to emphasize the fact that one should not be misled by its outer gross structure of being merely a cylindrical structure made of stone or rock but a divine symbol of the cosmic Atma that cannot be visualized by the naked eyes.

The physical Lingam is the visible form of the invisible Linga Deha of Shiva which is the Lord’s ethereal and cosmic form.

The fact that the Lingam is an image of Lord Shiva is affirmed by the Lord himself in the Atharva Veda’s Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 12 where the Lord preaches about the immense symbolic metaphysical importance and significance of the Lingam, and in paragraph nos. 14-15 when he preaches about the great many *benefits of worshipping the Shiva Lingam* which is his image, and *how to worship it*. To quote—

“verse no. 12 =[This verse emphasizes the importance and the significance of the Shiva Lingam as follows—] Even the Sun God, the Moon God, the Fire God and the Wind God (i.e. the primary Gods) are unaware of the mysteries and enigmatic glories of this Shiva-Lingam.

The self-illuminated and self-emerged or self-created Lingam extends as far as the pit of the earth known as Paataal.

This Shiva-Lingam is an image of me who am the Lord of the world. Hence, it is known as ‘Vishwanaath’ Lingam.

Worshipping it and paying obeisance to it is directly worshipping and paying obeisance to me.

A worshipper who offers his worship and obeisance to me, who serves me and honours me with full devotion, sincerity and faith, by offering three leaves of the Bilva

tree, and then offers the auspicious rewards of such exemplary worship to me (rather than expecting any gain for himself in return for such worship or service), who wears the Bhasma (sacred ash) and the Rudraksha beads as prescribed, who has sought my shelter and has taken refuge in my holy feet, and who is an unquestioned and most committed devotee of mine—verily I say that I accept his worship and free him from the fetter represented by the endless cycle of birth and death.

Even a great sin and its evil consequences are neutralized by offering daily worship to my Shiva-Lingam, by offering libations to me (a process known as ‘Abhishek’) and praying to me by reading or reciting the hymns of the Rudra Skuta daily with the greatest of devotion and faith, and then drinking the water left over after the completion of worship and offering of libations to my Lingam.

Such a devotee is free from all sorrows, grief, miseries and torments. He is freed from the shackling effect of this mundane and entrapping world. [12]

“verse no. 14 = (Benefits of worshipping the Shiva Lingam—) By offering libations to my Lingam, which is my image, with the milk drawn from a Kapila cow (i.e. a cow with reddish-brown, white, or white-spotted skin) while reciting the hymns of the Rudra Sukta, a devotee can obtain purification (pardon) from the horrendous sin of killing a Brahmin.

Offering of libations with the curd made from the milk of the Kapila cow helps one to eliminate or clean the great sin caused by drinking intoxicating liquids.

Offering of libations with clarified butter made from the milk of the Kapila cow helps one to overcome the grave sin caused by stealing gold (or theft of any kind).

Offering of libations with honey helps one to overcome the horrible ignominy and sin caused by being amorous towards the wife of one’s Guru (teacher and moral preceptor).

Offering of libations with white sugar helps one to overcome the sin of being cruel to others.

Offering of libations with milk and other products (as prescribed above) helps the devotee fulfill all his aspirations, desires and wishes.

By offering libations one hundred times with quantity of materials that are one hundred times more than that used for one standard routine offering (i.e. roughly 100 kilograms or 1 quintal by weight) helps the aspirant to free himself from the fetters that shackle him to this world. [14]

“verse no. 15 = (How to worship the Shiva Lingam—) My (Shiva’s) image in the form of the Shiva-Lingam should be offered worship during the time of the Aadra Nakshatra (an asterism known as Aadra), on the full moon day, on the new moon day, the Vyatipaata Yoga (the seventeenth astrological union of stars), on the occasion of eclipses (solar and lunar), and on the day of the Sakranti (the summer and winter solstice).

During these days, worship should be done by first offering libations followed by oblations. For this, the following items are to be used—sesame seeds, rice, barley, three leaves of the Bilva tree, clarified butter made from the milk of the Kapila cow, scents and fragrances, incense sticks, lighted lamp, sweets, fruit etc. Then flowers and water in cupped palms of the hands should be offered most respectfully at the end of the worship.

By offering worship and service to me with devotion and faith, the devotee obtains Sayujya Mukti (i.e. he becomes one with me).

If the worship is done with rice of quantity that is one hundred times that used for standard routine worship (i.e. roughly 100 kilograms or 1 quintal), the worshipper obtains the abode of the Moon God known as Chandra-loka.

If equal quantity of sesame seeds (i.e. roughly 100 kilograms or 1 quintal) is used for worship, the worshipper obtains the abode of the Vayu God (the Wind God).

If equal quantity of horse beans (i.e. roughly 100 kilograms or 1 quintal) is used for worship, the worshipper obtains the abode of the Varun God (the Water God).

If equal quantity of barley (i.e. roughly 100 kilograms or 1 quintal) is used for worship, the worshipper obtains the abode of the Surya God (the Sun God).

If twice the above amount of items are used for worship (i.e. if roughly 200 kilograms or 2 quintals are used), the worshipper obtains the higher heaven known as the Swarga-loka.

If four times the above quantity of items are used for offering worship to me (i.e. if roughly 400 kilograms or 4 quintals are used), the worshipper obtains the abode known as Brahma-loka, or the abode of Brahma the creator.

If worship is offered to me or my Lingam by using the items needed for such worship measuring one hundred times than the standard offerings (i.e. if roughly 100 x 100 = 10,000 kilograms or 100 quintals are used), the worshipper is freed from the jurisdiction of death, or clutches of death, as far as the Brahm-Kosha. [That is, he is freed from the fear of death till the time the creator would be born again. The word 'Kosh' means the source from which Brahma the creator was born, the point of time when Brahma was born. Refer paragraph no. 20 of this Canto 2 below.]

Since he is my devotee, he crosses over from the abode of Brahma and reaches my abode known as the Shiva-Loka that is beyond it. There is no abode or heaven better than it. He becomes free from all miseries and sorrows upon attaining it. He is freed from all fetters and encumbrances that had kept him shackled.

By worshipping me in my form as the Lingam, ascetics have attained great mystical powers. Those who do fire sacrifices (i.e. the worshippers of the sacred fire) are actually offering their obeisance to me when they offer their oblations to the sacred fire. It is me whose magnificence, holiness, eclectic glories and divine virtues are sung and lauded by the Vedas in their hymns.

It is proved beyond doubt by the great scriptures such as the Vedangas (branches of Vedas), the Upanishads, and the Itihaasas (ancient mythological histories) that there is nothing besides me in this creation. Everything is me; everything is established in me; I am the foundation and basis of everything. [This is because Lord Shiva is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified. Nothing exists in this creation that is not Brahm; it is Brahm who has manifested or revealed in every single unit of creation.] [15]"

The 12 Jyoti-Lingams—There are said to be twelve divine Lingams of Shiva, known as the 'Jyoti-lingams/Jyotirlingams', meaning self-radiant symbols of Lord Shiva. They are as follows—

(i) Sri Somnath (the Lord of Soma, the elixir of bliss; the Lord who wears the moon on his forehead)—This Lingam is situated in Saurashtra or Kathiawaad area of the western seaboard of India, located in the state of Gujrat. The particular area is also known in ancient scriptures as Prabhaas-kshetra.

(ii) Sri-Shail (the holy mountain)—This Lingam is located atop a mountain named Sri Mallikaarjun in the Krishna district of the state of Tamil Nadu in south India. It is often called the Kailash of the south, and is situated on the banks of river Krishna.

(iii) Sri Maha-Kaal (the Great Lord who controls death)—This Lingam is located the town of Ujjain (also known as Avantika-puri) in the Malwa area of Madhya Pradesh state of western India.

(iv) Sri Omkareshwar or Amaleshwar (the Lord whose cosmic form is represented by the sublime sound of the divine word OM)—This Lingam is located on the banks of river Narmada in the Malwa area of the state of Madhya Pradesh.

(v) Sri Vaidya-nath (the Lord of medicinal herbs; the Lord who takes care of the physical health and spiritual well-being of the world)—This Lingam is located in the eastern part of India in the district of Santhal Paragana in the present state of Jharkhand (previously Bihar). [According to many beliefs, there is another Lingam with the same name located in a village known as Parli. This village is near the town of Parvahi which itself is near the city of Hyderabad, the capital of the south-eastern state of Andhra Pradesh.

(vi) Sri Bhim-shankar (the Lord who was worshipped by Bhim, one of the Pandavas who were contemporaries of Lord Krishna during the Dwapar Yuga, the era that preceded the present era known as Kaliyuga)—This Lingam is situated on the banks of river Bhimaa, and is at a place that is east of the city of Mumbai and west of Pune in the state of Maharashtra in the west of India. The Lingam is present atop a hill known as 'Sahya-Parvat'. It is believed that in ancient times this area was infested by ghosts and phantoms, hence is also known as 'Daakini'—the female ghosts. [According to traditional belief, two other Lingams are also known by this name. One is mentioned in the Shiva Puran, and this Bhimshankar Lingam is located in the north-eastern state of Assam. Its exact location is atop a hill by the name of Brahma-pur which is situated in the district of Kamrup near the state's capital city of Gauhati. The other Bhimshankar Lingam is said to be located at a place called Ujjanak in the district of Nainital in the northern state of Uttarakhand.]

(vii) Sri Rameshwaram (the patron God of Lord Ram; the Lord who was worshipped by Sri Ram, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu during the second of the four-era cycle of creation and destruction, known as the Treta-yuga)—This Lingam is located in the southern tip of India in the district of Ram-nad in the state of Tamil Nadu. It was established and worshipped by Lord Ram himself just before he launched his assault on Lanka to free his divine consort Sita from the clutches of the demon king Ravana, as well as to eliminate the demons who had been tyrannizing the world. This event is mentioned in all the versions of the epic Ramayana that describes the story of the life and times of Lord Ram.

(viii) Sri Naageshwar (the Lord of serpents)—This Lingam is situated in the district of Baroda in the state of Gujarat. This area is also known as Darukavani. [According to some traditions, there are said to be two other places which are also known by this name. One is in the village of Audha-gram in the district of Hyderabad in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The second place is believed to be about 17 miles north-east from Almora in the foothills of the Himalayas in the north of India.

(ix) Sri Vishwa-nath (the Lord of the world)—This Lingam is situated in the well known city of Varanasi in the state of Uttar Pradesh in central part of India. It is located

on the banks of the holy river Ganges, and is also believed to be the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva. Varanasi is also known as Kashi in ancient texts, hence this Lingam is given another name that associates it with this holy pilgrim city—and it is ‘Kashi Vishwanaath’, the Lord of Kashi.

(x) Sri Trayambakeshwar (the Lord with three eyes)—This Lingam is located on the banks of river Godavari near a hill known as Brahma-giri in the district of Nasik in the state of Maharashtra. It is situated roughly 18 miles from a place known as Panchavati where it is believed that Lord Ram had stayed during his forest exile, and it is here that the demoness Supernakha had got her nose and ears chopped off for annoying Lord Ram.

(xi) Sri Kedar-nath (the Lord of Mt. Kedaar)—This Lingam is situated atop a peak known as Kedaar near the upper reaches of river Mandakini (Ganges) located in the lofty northern part of the mighty mountain range known as the Himalayas. The famous shrine of Badrinaath dedicated to Lord Vishnu is located on the upper banks of river Alaknanda to the east of this Kedaar mountain. The shrine falls under the jurisdiction of the state of Uttar Khand in northern India.

(xii) Sri Ghus-meshwar or Ghusri-neshwar—This Lingam of Lord Shiva is located in a shrine that is roughly 12 miles away from Daulatabad railway station, in the village of Berul.

The significance of the *moon on his forehead*, and his *five heads and the ten arms*—Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a *crescent moon* on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolizing the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire creation consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is called ‘one Pada’ or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The moon present on Shiva’s forehead also stands for the various eclectic qualities called Kalaas that he possesses and which adorn him like the moon. Symbolically, the devotee is advised to follow the example of his chosen deity Lord Shiva and note the symbolism of the Moon on his head. These eclectic qualities should be as prominent as the moon on the head of Shiva and they should form an integral part of the character of the devotee if he wishes to place himself in the position of being called a sincere follower and worshipper of Lord Shiva. Now let us have a glimpse of these *Kalaas*. They are the various eclectic qualities or attributes that an exalted man should possess, and briefly they are the following—(i) Shraddha (श्रद्धा—faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (प्राण—life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (आकाश—the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (वायु—wind, air element), (v) Tej (तेज—energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (अपः—water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) ‘Prithivi’ (पृथ्वी—earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (इन्द्रिय—the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (मन—the mind and heart complex and their stupendous

potentials), (x) Anna (अन्न—food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (वीर्य—semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (तपः— austerities and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self) (xiii) Mantra (मन्त्र—the ability to give good advice, the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (कर्म—taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (लोक—worldly interactions and behaviours), and (xvi) Naam (नाम—good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory).

Reference should be made to the Chandogya Upanishad, 6/7/1-6 of Sam Veda tradition in this context.

The *five heads* of Shiva stand for the 'Panch Vyom' or the five forms that the sky element is said to have. According to Vedanta, the concept of the *sky* or 'Akash' has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are *five* subtle skies representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or *Koshas* present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intellectual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Refer—Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

The *ten arms* of Shiva stand for the ten forms of the subtle sky element. They are the following—(1) Ghatakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash—the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash—the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash—the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash—the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahman has his abode because Brahman is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahman; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the inter-galactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called 'Swarga' which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile

pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

To quote *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 100—“This Lord Shiva is most pure and immaculate, and as clear and clean as pure crystal¹. He has a crescent moon tucked in the lock of hairs on his head. He has five mouths, is very sober, gentle and pleasant, has ten arms and three eyes (100).

[Note—Since Lord Shiva is the patron God of Yogis or those ascetics who do Yoga, especially those who practice its exercises and rituals as propounded by Patanjali, and this Upanishads deals with Yoga, the supreme transcendental Supreme Being known as Brahm of metaphysics and Upanishads is personified here in him.]”

The significance of the *serpents* wrapped around his body—The *snakes* that are wrapped around Lord Shiva show that he is beyond the power of death and poison.

These coiled serpents around his body indicate the fact that he constantly reminds himself of imminent death, because serpents are very poisonous and symbolise immediate death. They also remind him about the unholy and poisonous nature of the gross world. This helps him to remain focused on his spiritual aim of self-realisation instead of being attracted by the material charms of this material world of sense objects and getting deluded by them.

The serpents also signify that Shiva is the Lord of death; he is death personified. Since he is able to wrap the serpents around his body and they cannot harm him, it indicates the fact that he has conquered death. That is why he is called ‘Mrityunjay’, the conqueror of death.

Again, the coiled serpents represent the Kundalini, the coiled subtle cosmic energy center at the base of the spine which when activated can entitle the spiritual aspirant to experience a burst of stupendous spiritual energy which provides him a glimpse of his own divine powers as well as the powers of the cosmic Consciousness present inside his bosom as his Atma. This Kundalini is activated by doing numerous Yoga exercises as described in the Upanishads on the subject of Yoga.

The coiled serpents may also represent cycles of time in the macrocosm and the basic energy of life in the microcosm in the form of sexual energy.

These reptiles are very ferocious, dangerous, poisonous, and a symbol of male potency. The symbolism is that Shiva is a very potent God who can be extremely ruthless and unforgiving towards sinful creatures. He has exercised extreme self control and has ‘girdled’ or readied himself in preparation for enduring the greatest of hardships and sufferance for self-realisation as well as to provide the world with liberation and deliverance. The serpents warn his enemies not to fool around with him. That is also why he has fire in one of his hands. This fire signifies his ability to reduce to ashes the entire physical world consisting of falsehood and sins as well as eliminate all impurities, imperfections, faults and shortcomings that cripple the creature’s spiritual well being.

The *Trident* of Lord Shiva is known as ‘Trishul’, and it represents the three Gunas, or the three natural tendencies or the three fundamental qualities that are inherent in this creation and they govern all characteristics in the living world. These three Gunas are known respectively as the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and the Tama Guna.

The Trident is known as the 'Trishul', and is one of the most popular symbols associated with Lord Shiva. It is a weapon used by Lord Shiva for the restoration of Dharma. But the Trishul has a deeper symbolic meaning as follows—

The Trishul symbolizes the balance of the three forces of preservation, creation and destruction. It represents the three aspects of consciousness—cognition, conation and affection.

The *sound* of Shiva's *two-sided drum* represents the cosmic sound known as Naad that reverberates in the background of the cosmos. This sound is symbolically represented by the sound that is produced by uttering the word OM.

The *vehicle or mount* of Lord Shiva is the white *bull called the Nandi*—which means the cheerful one, the joyful one. The bull on which Lord Shiva rides represents virility and strength, the animal-like power and basic instincts in a man.

In Shiva temples, there is always a reclining bull placed in front of the chief shrine or just outside it, with the head turned away from the deity but the gaze fixed on it. It is interpreted as the Jivatma, the individual soul of all living being, with its animal-like nature pulling it away from God, but the Lord's grace pulling it back towards him.

Lord Shiva is often depicted in the Purans and imagery as *seated* on a tiger skin or *wears* a tiger skin. Here, the tiger represents the stupendous power of the mind.

Lord Shiva *lives* on Mount Kailash that is located in the northern side of the mighty mountain range known as the Himalayas.

1.4 Mantras pertaining to Shiva, according to the Upanishads—

References: (i) Krishna Yajur Veda = Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse no. 16 (Mantra of Rudra); Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 30 (Mantra of Shiva). (ii) Atharva Veda = Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 1-6 (Mantra of Lord Trayambak); paragraph no. 8 (Mantra of Lord Shiva or Rudra); Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1; Canto 2, paragraph no. 3 (Rudra Mantra/Sukta); Canto 2, paragraph nos. 4, 18 (Tarak Mantras of Rudra); Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 3, verse no. 12-13; Brahman 6, verse no. 5-6; Brahman 7, verse no. 1 (the seven-lettered Mantra of Rudra, known as the Shat-Rudra Mantra); Sharav Upanishad, verse nos. 10, 23, 26, 33-34.

Now, let us see these Mantras in brief.

(i) The *one-word Mantra* of Shiva—It is the Lord's name 'Shiva' that is in itself a Mantra. Hence, the one-letter eclectic Mantra of Lord Shiva is *Shiva* or *Shivam*. Refer *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph no. 4.

(ii) The *two-letter Mantra* of Shiva or Rudra is the *Rudra Mantra*—The eclectic Mantra is *Rudra-Rudra*. It is dedicated to Lord Rudra who is one of the eleven divine forms of Lord Shiva. It is described in *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 16. [The two letters are 'Ru + Dra =2.] It is so powerful and grand that it is said to incorporate all the Mantras of the not only the other two Gods of the Trinity, viz.

Vishnu and Brahma, but all other Gods combined. To quote this Upanishad—“Therefore, a wise and enlightened man who repeats the great Mantra ‘Rudra Rudra’ and remembers the great Lord is symbolically worshipping all the Gods and repeating their Mantras. This helps him to overcome the evil effects of all sins and misdeeds (16).

[Note—In the view of what has been expounded in this Upanishad, the Mantra ‘Rudra-Rudra’ would deem to include the divine Mantras of all the Gods of the Trinity—i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Much like OM which is the universal Mantra for the supreme transcendental Brahman, this Mantra ‘Rudra-Rudra’ is the universal Mantra for all the Gods combined.]”

(iii) The *five-letter Mantra* of Lord Shiva has been described in *Panch Brahm Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 30. It is ‘Namaha Shivaaye’. [Na + Maha + Shi + Va + Ye = 5.]

(iv) The *six-letter Mantra* of Shiva or Rudra is ‘OM Namaha Shiva OM’ which is mentioned in the Atharva Veda’s *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, paragraph no. 8; *Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman 3, verse no. 12-13. [OM + Na + Maha + Shi + Vaa + OM = 6.]

The *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 4, 18 however says that that the six-letter Mantra of Lord Shiva is ‘OM Namaha Shivaaye’. [OM + Na + Maha + Shi + Vaa + Ye = 6.] This is the Tarak Mantra of Lord Shiva. [Canto 2, paragraph no. 18.]

(v) The *seven-letter Mantra* of Lord Shiva or Rudra is ‘OM Namaha Shivaaye OM’. [OM + Na + Maha + Shi + Vaa + Ye + OM = 7.]

(vi) The *eight-letter Mantra* of Lord Shiva is ‘OM Namaha Mahaa-devaaye’. It is given in *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 2, paragraph no. 4. [OM + Na + Maha + Ma + Haa + De + Vaa + Ye = 8.]

This Upanishad says that the eight-letter Mantra of Shiva is known as the Tarak Mantra, the one which provides liberation and deliverance to the spiritual seeker. This Mantra provides liberation and deliverance to the devotees of Lord Shiva in the Lord’s terrestrial abode known as the pilgrim city of Kashi. Preaching this Tarak Mantra of Lord Shiva is equivalent to the preaching of the Mantras of the Vedas. [In other words, this is the Veda Mantra.]

(vii) The *Trayambak Mantra* is described in the *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4 which is entirely devoted to *Lord Trayambak*. It describes the meaning of this word and the Mantras dedicated to Lord Trayambak in great detail. This Mantra is given in Canto 4, paragraph nos. 1-6, and it is ‘Trayambakam Yajamahe Sugandhim Pushti-varadhan Urvaaruk-miv Bandhanaan-mrityor-mukshi-yeti Mamritaam’.

(viii) The Atharva Veda’s *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph no. 4, and *Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman no. 6, verse nos. 5-6 says that the Mantra/Sukta of Lord Rudra (Shiva) should be said while preparing the sacred Bhasma (ash) for applying on the body of the ascetic.

(ix) The Atharva Veda's *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1, and Canto 2, paragraph no. 3 say that after praying to Lord Shiva by using the *Rudra Sukta/Mantra*, the worshipper should offer the Lord white Bhasma, the fruits of the Bel tree (the wood-apple tree; *Aegla marmelos*), and leaves of the Bilva tree (*Aegle marmelos*). The leaves of the Bilva tree should be green (i.e. freshly plucked) and three in number. If green leaves are not available, then dry leaves can also be offered

Now, let see what these *two Rudra Suktas/Mantras* are—

“Canto 1, paragraph no. 1 = The Lord known as Maha-Dev was an embodiment of OM (the ethereal sound manifestation of the supreme Brahman also known as Pranav). He was accompanied by his divine consort named Uma (the Mother Goddess).

He had a crown of matted hairs on his head. He had three eyes represented by the sun, the moon and the fire. He was wrapped in the hide of a tiger. He held his hands like a deer (i.e. his hands were resting on his folded-in legs as he sat in meditation posture). His body was adorned (smeared) by the ‘Bhasma’ (ash of the fire sacrifice).

On his forehead were marked the three lines of the Tripund (which is a sacred mark borne by ascetics). There was a subtle sweet and pleasant smile on his face. His body was cheerful and he had a pleasant demeanour (i.e. he was rested and calm; he was not agitated, fidgety or upset).

He was like a lion who was sitting in the posture known as ‘Viraasan’. [This one of the many sitting postures of Yoga, and is usually adopted by brave warriors, hence the name ‘Viraasan’. The word ‘Vir’ means one who is brave, valiant, gallant, bold, courageous, daring and mighty.]

He is so mystical and sublime that he is beyond the purview of proofs and measurements.

He is ‘Anaadi and Anant’—i.e. he is without an end or beginning as he is eternal, infinite and imperishable.

He is ‘Niskal’—i.e. he is the one who has no taints, faults, blemishes and imperfections that can scar his immaculacy and purity. He is immaculate and without any faults or blemishes as he is free from all the corrupting influences of Maya (delusions and deceit).

He is ‘Nirguna’—i.e. he has no attributes or qualities or physical forms in the true sense (as the Lord is not an ordinary God with attributes, but the Supreme Being who has no known forms, specific attributes and describable qualities).

He is ‘Shanta’—i.e. he is calm, serene, peaceful and tranquil.

He is ‘Niranjan’—i.e. he is faultless, flawless, uncorrupted, untainted and without any blemishes of any kind. [A Niranjan is an entity that has no defects, faults, taints, blemishes, shortcomings and scars of any kind; one who is absolutely immaculate and pristine pure. It is an epithet applied to Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. one whose sublime, subtle, esoteric and mystical form is so microscopic and diffused that it cannot be seen by the naked eyes of the physical gross body, but which can only be perceived by the eye of wisdom, erudition and enlightenment.]

He is ‘Niraamaye’, i.e. he is healthy and without any moral or physical ailments or tainting affects that are like a disease that might afflict a person's spiritual well being. One who is free from any kind of diseases—spiritual, mental, physical, psychological, moral etc. that may taint one's character and personality.

He (Lord Maha-Dev) was pronouncing the Beej Mantra ‘Hum’, ‘Phat’ etc., and continuously repeating the holy name of the Supreme Being who is also known as ‘Shiva’. That is, he was meditating upon his own pure and enlightened ‘self’ which is truly the Supreme Being known as Brahm manifested in the form of the Atma, the cosmic Consciousness. Hence, he was doing Japa with the Mantra ‘Shiva-Shiva’.

His is a living embodiment of the virtues for which the word ‘Hiranya’ is an aphorism. That is, the Lord has a radiance that is like gold; his hands (limbs) have a golden radiance, his form is like gold, his countenance is golden, and he is a treasury of immaculate virtues which resemble gold. [Since gold is the most precious metal, all his virtues and characteristics are completely immaculate and of the highest quality.]

The Lord is a personification of the grand philosophy of Advaita, the philosophy of non-duality which says that there is only one Brahm or cosmic Truth in the form of Consciousness that is revealed in all the forms that this creation has taken, and therefore whatever that exists is nothing but one single Brahm. [In other words, Lord Maha-Dev is perfectly wise, enlightened and Brahm-realised in as much as he sees no difference between himself and the Supreme Being. This is the reason he is repeating the Mantra ‘Shiva’ while meditating.]

Since he is extremely enlightened, self-realised and Brahm-realised, he stays in the fourth state of Turiya. [This is the transcendental state of existence in which the ascetic lives in a state of trance. He is so deeply submerged in meditation and contemplation that he is not even aware of his body and what it does, and therefore there is no question of his being aware of the surrounding material world and its temptations. Hence, he is free from all corruptions and delusions that mire an ordinary soul.]

This fourth state is a representative of the Supreme Being who is beyond the Trinity Gods known as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder. Hence, the Lord who stays in this eclectic and sublime state of Consciousness is known as ‘Maha-Dev’, the great Lord. [This fact has been expressly emphasized in the Pashupat Upanishad, Purva Kand, verse no. 10, which is the nineteenth Upanishad of the Atharva Veda.]

Such a divine and majestic Lord is the fulfiller of all the desires of his devotees.

Sage Jabal Bhusund politely bowed before the Lord repeatedly, worshipped him and paid his obeisance to him, offered him fruits of the Bilva tree (*Aegle marmelos*) and Bhasma (ash of the fire sacrifice), bowed his head, and asked him with folded hands as a gesture of politeness and submission—‘Oh Lord! You are well-versed in the essence of the Vedas and their profound teachings. Please tell me about the rules and tenets pertaining to the ‘Tripund²’ as described and prescribed in the Vedas, and by following which one is able to attain Moksha (final liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation). One need not take the recourse of any other means if one fully understands this doctrine. (1).

“Canto 2, paragraph no. 3 = ‘The Lord is sitting on the Nandi (the bull). His arms are of a golden hue; his general countenance also has a golden hue; and his form appears to be cast in gold.

The Lord is the eliminator or destroyer of the snare represented by the continuous cycle of birth and death that has shackled all the living beings in its vicious grip. [That is, the Lord grants the boon of Mukti, or liberation and deliverance, to all the creatures.]

He is the primordial Purush personified. [That is, Lord Shiva is a personified form of the cosmic Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic all-pervading and all-encompassing gross but invisible form of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being.]

His neck is coloured dark with a tinge of yellow¹.

He is highly self-realised, enlightened and wise ('Urdhva-reta').

He has three eyes ('Trilochan'). [The Lord has two conventional eyes, and one eye on the middle of the forehead signifying the mystical powers of insight that comes with the highest form of wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge and self-realisation.]

He has taken the form of this whole world ('Vishwa-roop'). This is because the entire creation is a revelation of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and Shiva is a personified form of Brahm.

That is why he is said to have thousands of eyes ('Sahastraaksham') symbolizing countless creatures. This is also metaphor for the fact that nothing is hidden from the Lord, for he 'sees' everything, even the most secret and the esoteric.

Similarly, he has thousands of heads ('Sahastra-shirsha'), and thousands of legs ('Sahastra-charan'). In fact, the entire creation (world) is embraced in his arms; this whole creation represents his arms. [If he has 'thousands of eyes', then it is natural that he would also have equal number of heads. It also means that the Lord has equal number of mouths, tongues, ears, noses etc. Again, if he has thousands of legs it also implies that he must have equal number of hands. All this simply indicate that the entire creation is a majestic multifarious revelation of one single Divinity known as Shiva.]

Hence, Lord Shiva represents the Atma (soul) of the whole creation. [This reflects upon the metaphysical doctrine that the word 'Atma' refers to the pure consciousness that resides inside the body of an individual creature as his 'true self'. This Atma of the individual is the microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic Consciousness that is universal and uniformly pervades throughout this creation. This universal Atma at the macrocosmic level of creation is known as Brahm. This Brahm therefore is the subtlest and most sublime entity in existence. When this Brahm revealed itself, it went through subtle steps in its transition from the subtlest to the grossest forms. The first step was the Viraat Purush, the all-pervading, all-encompassing, all-inclusive invisible macrocosmic form of Brahm which was the latter's first gross form. The word 'gross' when applied to the Viraat Purush is only in terms of relativity, for both Brahm and Viraat are sublime and subtle when compared to the word 'gross' as is understood in the context of the visible world of material sense objects. It is easy to understand this phenomenon—we have air all around us, but do we feel it, can we survive without it? Obviously, the answer is no. But when this same air moves or shows some 'gross' virtues, such as its form known as the 'wind' which is felt when the 'breeze' wafts gradually or a 'storm' blows violently, it is then we can actually feel it bristling against our skins; but still we can't see it. Now, when this same air has pollutants in it, like smoke or coloured gases, we can actually 'see' the air. The same thing applies to Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. The Viraat Purush is like the 'wind', and the rest of the creation that evolved from this single Viraat Purush is like the various forms the same wind has taken in this world. The grosser revelation of this Viraat Purush in the form of the visible world is akin to the instance of smoke, coloured gases or other pollutants which make us see the invisible wind move. It is the grossest form of the subtlest Brahm.]

Since Lord Shiva is Brahm personified, it is natural that all the honours and epithets applied to Brahm would also apply to Shiva.

Hence, Shiva is 'Advaita'—i.e. he is non-dual.

He is 'Nishkal'—i.e. he has no Kalaas, i.e. no separate or distinct attributes, forms, parts, divisions, variations and fractions as he is one immutable whole; one who has no taints, faults, blemishes and imperfections that can scar his immaculacy and purity; one who is immaculate and without any faults or blemishes as he is free from all the corrupting influences of Maya representing delusions, conceit and deceit).

He is 'Nishkriya'—i.e. he is not involved in any of the affairs of the world, as he is totally neutral, detached and dispassionate, has renounced everything, and being self-realised he knows that the deeds are done by the gross body and not by the Atma which is merely a neutral witness of what the body does.

He is absolutely 'Shaanta'—i.e. he is calm, peaceful, serene, rested, tranquil, having no restlessness or agitations.

He is 'Shiva'—i.e. he is an embodiment of the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, divinity and holiness.

He is 'Akshar'—i.e. he is imperishable and one who is represented by the divine word OM.

He is 'Avyaya'—i.e. he is not diminished; he is infinite; he is eternal, unchanging and imperishable; he is not subject to degradation.

He is the eternal Lord (the Supreme Being; Brahm) from whom Hari (Vishnu the sustainer), Har (Rudra the concluder) and Hiranyagarbha (Brahma the creator) have come into being.

This supreme Creator and Lord of creation cannot be known or verified or judged by proofs, evidences and logics.

The Lord has no beginning or end.' (3).

[Note—¹Lord Shiva's throat is dark blue or purple in colour. Since the glow and radiance of the whole body of the Lord is golden but the throat had turned black because he had kept the horrible poison he had drunk in his throat instead of allowing it to enter the stomach. This corroding poison had emerged from the ocean when it was churned by the Gods and Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternity. The Lord had accepted to drink it to protect the rest of the creation from getting scorched by its heat and toxins. Since this creation is lodged in the Lord's own self, in his abdomen, he had kept this poison in the throat and did not allow it to enter his stomach. This resulted in the throat getting permanently burnt. The dark blue or purple colour of the Lord's throat is the result of this single event and shows the Lord's willingness to go to any length to grant his unilateral protection to this creation.

It is very interesting to note that while on the one hand Lord Shiva is depicted as being the concluder of creation—and this is assigned role amongst the Trinity of Gods consisting of Brahma, whose role is to create, Vishnu, whose role is to sustain, nourish and protect the creation, and Rudra (a form of Shiva), whose designated role is to bring about the conclusion of this creation—but on the other hand he had allowed himself to be permanently dis-coloured and take the risk of keeping the most horrible poison in existence lodged inside his body because otherwise this poison would kill the creation and scald everything in it to ashes. This is the reason why only Shiva is honoured as being the 'Maha-Deva', the 'great' God. Though Vishnu shoulders the formidable, most daunting and arduous task of taking care of the whole creation—and this is not a cake-walk and a joke considering what a man experiences in life taking care of his single

family, what to talk of the whole society—this honour of being a Maha-Deva was not bestowed upon him. The same thing applies to the grand old patriarch of creation called Brahma who had not only created this gross world but even the sources of highest wisdom in the form of the venerable scriptures, but was not honoured with this title.

Hence, Shiva is truly the Supreme Being personified. One of his functions is to conclude this creation, and in this role he is known as Rudra, the angry form. But even as the same Brahm is known to have revealed himself in the form of each and every unit of creation which is extremely diverse and multifarious, the same Shiva has taken many names and assumed many roles, one of which is ‘conclusion’.]”

(x) The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse/paragraph no. 8 describes the great Mantra of Lord Shiva which gives the worshipper the stature equivalent to that of Lord Shiva. To quote—“The Lord (Shiva) replied, ‘You must worship the God who vanquishes death with the help of the Anushtup Chanda ‘Trayambak’ etc. (narrated above).

It has been said from the beginning that the monosyllabic word OM is a representative of the Lord (the supreme transcendental Brahm) who is universal and uniformly all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing.

Hence, those who worship the Lord with Mantra ‘OM Namaha Shivaaye’ of the Yajur Veda are able to attain the exalted stature equivalent to Lord Rudra. He is rewarded with auspiciousness. [This Mantra briefly means ‘Salutations to the Lord represented by the word OM! I bow before Lord Shiva who is this particular supreme transcendental Lord’.]

You must be fully enlightened about it. [That is, a spiritual aspirant who knows the profound import of this great Mantra uses it for offering worship to the Lord in order to attain the supreme state of enlightenment that gives him salvation and emancipation.] [8].”

(xi) The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse/paragraph nos. 2-6 describe the great Mantra of Lord Shiva in his divine form as Trayambak. The full Mantra is ‘Trayambakam Yajamahe Sugandhim Pushti-varadhan Urwaaruk-miv Bandhanaan-mrityor-mukshi-yeti Mamritaam’

(xii) The *Sharav Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, verse nos. 10, 23, 26, 33-34, describes the glories of Lord Shiva as follows—

“verse no. 10 = We bow reverentially and pay our obeisance to the great Lord known as Rudra who can burn to ashes the entire world by the fierce spurt of fire emanating from the third eye located in his forehead¹, and is so gracious that he re-creates it once again after punishing it (for its sins and misdeeds by reducing it to ashes), and then offers it his protection (10).

“verse no. 23 = Lord Maheswar, the Great God (‘Ishwar’) and Lord of all the other gods, is truthful, is eternal, unchanging, steady and always omnipresent everywhere, is a (neutral and dispassionate) witness to all and everything (that is happening in this creation), is eternally blissful and happy, has no comparison or parallel in this creation, and is indescribable and incomprehensible.

The Lord or Bhagwan is also known as ‘Girish’ as he is the Lord of mountains. [This is because the symbolic abode of Shiva is said to be on the higher reaches of snow-covered Mt. Kailash. The reason for Shiva living in mountains is that he is the greatest Yogi or ascetic, and for an ascetic it is prescribed in the scriptures that he makes mountains and forests his abode. This is to help him in his meditation and contemplation or other forms of spiritual exercises. Mountains are places that give serenity, solitude, peace and tranquillity to the soul. They are the natural habitat for those who wish to pursue spiritual path of meditation and contemplation because they provide the aspirant with the perfect environment that fits their spiritual needs. Besides this, the mountains are metaphors for areas on earth where the positive energy of the consciousness is at its peak—and this is physically depicted in the form of high peaks of mountains that almost touch the sky.]

We say that the Lord lives there or anything else about the Lord only because we imagine it to be so, as it is just not possible to know about him (23).

“verse no. 26 = Everything in existence comes to an end in a regular cycle and in a sequential order when the time comes. Therefore, everything is impermanent, mortal and perishable, and hence false and illusionary. [This is because if they would have been real and truthful then they would have been permanent and immortal, as ‘truth’ never ends and it is constant.]

OM salutations! We pay our obeisance and greatest of respect to that Great Lord known as Mahadev (literally the great God or Lord) holding the ‘Shul’ (the invincible and strong spear or any sharp pointed weapon, here meaning the trident held by Shiva) who devours everything and brings them to an end. [That is, Shiva is the Authority that concludes this creation.]

At the same time our obeisance and greatest of respect are meant for the same Lord Maheshwar (literally the great Ishwar or God or Lord) known as Rudra (or Shiva) who is ever so merciful, gracious, benevolent and munificent on all (26).

“verse no. 33-34 = Shiva is the only truthful, eternal and imperishable entity that remains infinitely constant, steady and unchanging, that is immutable and indivisible. Except Shiva everything else is un-truth, illusionary and false.

That is why besides the other exalted God known as Vishnu, the aspirant should meditate and contemplate only upon Lord Shiva who is the Lord (like Vishnu) who can help the aspirant to break free from all the fetters that shackle him down and prevent his liberation and deliverance from this ensnaring world.

We pay our sincere obeisance and the greatest of respect to Maheshwar (the great Lord God) who provides liberation and deliverance from the formidable snare of this world which is very difficult to break free from, as well as is the Lord who devours everything in this world. [Refer verse nos. 10, 17-18, 24, 26 and 30 in this context.] (33-34).”

1.5 The Shiva Tattva—

The essence of the Shiva principle called the Shiva Tattva has been dealt with in Krishna Yajur Veda's *Dakshin Murti Upanishad*, verse nos. 4-5, 24, 28-30; *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 6, Canto 4, verse no. 32; *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad*, verse nos. 5-6, 12-14.

Shiva Tattva—The word 'Tattva' means truth, reality, essence, fundamental aspect, the primary and basic element, the real and truthful principle, while the word 'Shiva' stand for a host of eclectic virtues and divine glories exemplified and personified by Lord Shiva, such as the divine and grand virtues of spiritual beauty, auspiciousness, truthfulness, righteousness, nobility, dispassion, detachment, wisdom, knowledge, enlightenment etc.

Since the primary essence and the basic elementary Truth of creation that is absolute, pristine pure, uncorrupted, untainted, immutable, eternal, imperishable and universal, that is auspicious, righteous and noble, is known as Brahm, and since these virtues are undiluted, untainted and eternally truthful, since they are unchallengeable and irrefutable 'truths and reality' of existence, they are collectively called the 'Shiva Principle'. Lord Shiva is the ultimate Authority and Principal of creation who personifies these virtues.

The word Shiva refers to one is not only beautiful, auspicious, holy and truthful, who is not only most enlightened, wise, self-realised and Brahm-realised, but personify or embody these virtues in his own self. That is why Shiva is the universal teacher and preacher of the great principles and tenets of metaphysics and spirituality because there is no one more competent, more knowledgeable and wiser than him. This is also the reason why he is depicted always in a state of perpetual Samadhi—the state of perpetual meditation and contemplation, because he has tasted the nectar of eternal bliss and happiness that comes with realising the ultimate Truth of existence which fills the spiritual aspirant with an extreme sense of contentedness and ecstasy.

It must be remembered that all Upanishads rely on and unequivocally expound upon one basic philosophy, and it is the tenet of 'Advaita' or 'non-duality'. They endeavour to establish by their teachings that the 'Tattva', or the fundamental essence behind everything in this living creation, no matter what its external form and quality is and what the context and circumstance are—is basically the one and the same entity that is known as pure cosmic Consciousness. Since the underlying essence is the same and it remains constant, unchanging, immutable, indivisible and universal inspite of the mind-boggling variations in which it is manifested in this visible world, since nothing can exist without this fundamental essence, and since it would outlast all known visible faces of creation that appear to be true on their face but are fundamentally flawed because they come to an end whereas 'truth' should be eternal and imperishable, it is known as 'Tattva', the great essence and fundamental 'truth' behind everything.

So, the Shiva Tattva being talked about here is the ultimate essence or Tattva that is 'Shiva' in nature. That is, the essence that is basically truthful, beautiful, auspicious, holy and divine in nature.

The main aim of all spiritual pursuit and study of the scriptures is to become aware of the supreme and irrefutable Truth that is Absolute in this creation along with the

basic principles that define this Absolute Truth and form its eclectic essence. Since the concept of the Absolute Truth is too abstract to be comprehended by the mind, it has been personified as a deity or Deva. What is it? It is the eclectic, esoteric and mystical knowledge and awareness of the cosmic, universal and eternal divine Being who personifies this Truth, and who is the subject matter of all metaphysical research and spiritual practices. This Supreme Being is none other but Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. The knowledge of this Brahm is known as the Shiva Tattva—the auspicious, holy and divine essence and principle that defines and governs the enigmatic and mysterious entity known as Brahm.

It is like the case of the hidden nucleus around which the electrons move in an atom, or the atom itself which is invisible but forms the basic building block around which all the molecules are constructed, and which in turn form the basis of all material things that have come into existence in this world. If we remove the nucleus or the atom, nothing would exist though no one has actually seen either of them.

The varying ratio of the three basic qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama in a person determine his individuality, and since the chances of these qualities mixing with each other is phenomenally large, we have countless types of men with no two individuals having everything in common. But suppose a situation is brought about when these three Gunas neutralise each other, as the case was before the beginning of creation when they were present in Brahm but lay in a neutral state, it would result in the elimination of all disparities and differences seen in this world. That is, the state of non-duality, homogeneity and uniformity would be reached. All variations and changes would cease to matter—what is now would also be in the future, and it was the same in the past. This is the basis of the theory of non-duality, i.e. that what was then is present now and would be there in the future and beyond. Since only ‘truth’ does not change, the entity targeted by this Upanishad is this ultimate ‘absolute truth’ which it prefers to call the ‘Shiva Tattva’.

Now let us see what the *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 4-5, 24, and 28-30 have to say on the subject.

“Verse nos. 4-5 = He (Maarkandey) began his discourse—‘That esoteric, mystical and eclectic divine knowledge and wisdom which kindles spiritual awareness and enlightenment in a spiritual aspirant and seeker, culminating in the revelation to him of the supreme essence pertaining to Lord Shiva who is famously known as ‘Dakshin Mukhi or Dakshinaa Mukha’¹, is the known as ‘Shiva Tattva’.

The supreme transcendental Lord who winds up the entire creation at the time of its end (i.e. at the time of its conclusion, called the ‘dooms-day’), retracting it and establishing it in his own Atma or pure conscious cosmic Self (i. e. in his own bosom just like an octopus withdrawing its tentacles or a tortoise retracting its limbs in its shell) is the patron deity or Deva of this knowledge².

This Lord (i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm in his most elementary and truthful form known as ‘Shiva Tattva’—the primary essence, the basic elementary truth, known as the ‘Shiva Principle’, of creation) remains perpetually blissful by submerging himself in his own consciousness known as the Atma. He is self-illuminated (because illumination and light are metaphors for consciousness, enlightenment and knowledge that are holistic, divine, holy and auspicious) (4-5).

[Note—¹The word *Dakshin Mukhi* has two parts. The second part 'Mukha' means 'face', while the word 'Dakshin' has three connotations here—viz. 'south', 'right' and 'knowledge and wisdom'. Since Lord Shiva faced 'south' when he taught the ancient sages and seers who had approached him in some earlier time to gain divine wisdom and metaphysical knowledge which only he could impart to them, he was known as 'the Lord facing south'. Since the knowledge imparted by him was astoundingly unique, most esoteric and divine, besides being the most 'right' or correct and precise 'knowledge' of metaphysics which granted 'a divine wisdom as well as spiritual vision' to its followers, making them experts and skilled in this knowledge, it was called 'Dakshin'.

The word 'Dakshin' is derived from the word 'Daksha' which means to be an expert and skilled in any field of knowledge. Since Shiva is an expert God in the knowledge of Brahm and the Atma, he is therefore the most competent and expert teacher and preacher of this subject. A wise and skilled teacher is one who can make even difficult and rare knowledge easily accessible to this students, and for this purpose he must have a first hand experience of its intricate details so that he can solve all the problems, satisfy their queries, and attend to other nitty-gritties.

In other words, the *Dakshin Murti* is the 'image' ('Murti') form of Shiva as a wise and enlightened teacher as well as an expert preacher of divine knowledge which is meant to make the disciple aware of the actual principles and the secret truth hidden in this world behind the arcade of falsehood and deceptions that are so typical of this deluding material world so as to enable him to attain a state of eternal blessedness marked by eternal spiritual peace, happiness, beatitude and felicity. It's the correct and auspicious path to self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. And since he had done so while facing south, he came to be known as 'Dakshin Mukhi'—or the south facing Lord who also happens to be an erudite and wise teacher and preacher.

Again, if we take the other name *Dakshinaa Mukha* it would mean 'one who is a personification of the virtues of donation and charity'. The word 'Dakshinaa' means giving away charitably and making selfless donation, while 'Mukha' means 'mouth'. In other words, Lord Shiva has been extremely gracious, benevolent, liberal and magnanimous in giving away whatever he has, and in this particular case he has given away eternal spiritual knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the non-dual reality of the 'self' as a personification of Brahm. Since teaching is done by the 'mouth', hence this donation and charity that he made was through the mouth, entitling him to be called 'Dakshinaa Mukhi'.

²Lord Shiva is regarded as the God assigned the duty of bringing about conclusion of creation. In fact, Shiva is another manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, in his role as the concluder of creation just like there is Brahma the creator and Vishnu the care-taker, both being the same Lord in his various roles. The Shiva that is referred to in this Upanishad and the one who ought to be worshipped is not his external form as the ferocious and merciless 'God of death' but the hidden element of Truth and Reality that governs this creation and which acts as the dynamic Principal that works behind the scene to bring about the conclusion of this vast creation, retract it in his own bosom like a father would embrace his offspring to protect it from the impending danger, and then when the time is conducive, to make it re-emerge once again with a new mandate and a fresh lease of life. Obviously, such an entity is known by the name of Brahm in the Upanishads. In his role as the creator, this cosmic Principal is known as Brahma, as the sustainer, nourisher and protector it is known as Vishnu, and as concluder it is called Shiva. These three Gods of the Trinity represent the basic elements of creation from which the entire creation has come into being. In this context, the reader is advised to refer to Yogattva Upanishad, verse no. 85-102 which basically describe how the five elements have personified as these three Gods.]

“Verse no. 24 = To strike a perfect balance and establish a perfect harmony and equanimity of the three Gunas (i.e. the Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas inherent in the creature is varying ratios that determine his individual character and personality as well as his mental setup and demeanours) is like Kaal or the death-knell of variables and dichotomies that create innumerable distortions, confusions and perplexities that occur in the world in its three dimensions of time (such as the past, the present and the future) (24).

“Verse no. 28-29 = When the darkness of Agyan (ignorance and delusions) is removed by the medium of the light of shown by Gyan (truthful knowledge and wisdom), Bhakti (devotion and faith) and Vairagya (dispassion and detachment from falsehood and deluding world)—it is only then that the lamp of self-realisation springs to life on its own. That is, the self-illuminated Atma begins to show its divine presence.

One should use one’s Gyan (knowledge and wisdom) as the upper part of the Arani¹ which is used as a rubbing rod to vigorously arouse Vairagya (the grand virtues of dispassion and detachment) which acts as the lower end of the Arani to produce the fire of enlightenment and total dispassion or non-involvement with things that are not real and true so that this ‘light’ can remove the darkness of Moha and Agyan (delusions and ignorance) that act as impediments or obstacles in the awareness of the supreme Tattva, i.e. in the realisation of the ultimate reality about the pure consciousness which is the true ‘self’. These two—Moha and Agyan—are equivalent to death of the creature because they create extreme fear and confusion for him.

That supreme transcendental Tattva (essence and fundamental truth) is realizable only by the means of constantly pursuing the path of Gyan and Vairagya as well as doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation). [Like in the field of modern science, research and diligence is to be continuous process and not an ad-hoc approach. Like the case when remains healthy if one eats a balanced diet for the whole of his life and not gorge upon food once and then fast for a long time to compensate for it, meditation and contemplation, learning and experimenting should be a continuous process to fine tune one’s efforts and have better and finer experiences of spiritualism through life.]² (28-29).

[Note—¹The *Arani* consists of two pieces of wood used to self-produce the fire during fire sacrifices by vigorously rubbing them against one another. The lower piece is rectangular in shape with a hole or indentation in the middle; it is made of a softer form of wood, usually of the Ashvatta tree (*Ficus religiosa*). It is called the lower Arani or the ‘Adharani’ and is likened to the female uterus. The upper piece of wood is in the form of a churning or rubbing rod made of hard wood, usually Shami tree (*Acacia suma*), and it is called ‘Uttararani’. It is equivalent to the male phallus. The upper piece is inserted in the hole of the lower piece and vigorously turned with the help of a long string or cord. This rubbing generates heat and results in the creation of fire at the point of friction. This fire is the offspring of this union of the cosmic male and female.

In the present example, the upper part of the Arani which is vigorously turned is the Gyan, while the lower part is represented by Vairagya. The idea is that with proper use of Gyan or truthful knowledge, an aspirant can ignite the fire of renunciation and detachment from this world and its material charms, and this light of enlightenment would in its wake remove the darkness of delusions that they have cast upon him.

The analogy of the Arani has been cited in a number of Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda, e.g. Kathwalli Upanishad, Canto 2, Valli 1, verse no. 8; Brahm Upanishad,

verse no. 18; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse no. 11; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14-15, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 22.

²The same idea has been expounded in Yogatattva Upanishad, verse nos. 14-18 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

“Verse no. 30 = Not to think of and contemplate on the supreme Truth is equivalent to the fetter that shackles the creature to this world. [This is because the mind cannot stay quiet, and neither can the organs remain idle. So if their energy and restlessness is not directed or channelised properly to something spiritually better and constructive, they would automatically and naturally gravitate or swerve towards their natural habitat, which in this case is this material world of delusions and artificiality, a world full of sense objects that keep the creature trapped in their snare by their magical charms, in an instinctive manner. This happens due to ignorance about the truth and reality of existence. The creature erroneously and out of ignorance thinks that the pleasures and comforts of the world are for real as much as the fallacious conception that he has about the gross and perishable body as being his ‘true self’ instead of the Atma. Falsehood and deception are like fetters that tie the creature’s soul to this world of birth and death because he would be entangled in its vice-like grip. He would be under the impression that the deeds done by the body are being done by ‘him’—and that therefore he is entitled to reap the fruits of such deeds. He forget in the process that what he considers as ‘him’ is not the ‘real self’ of his but only a temporary dwelling in as much as the ‘real self’ is the pure consciousness called the Atma that merely resides in this gross body and is not involved in any of the deeds done by the latter. This Atma is eternal and imperishable as opposed to the body, and therefore all the miseries to which the creature is subjected to in this world are actually limited to the body and do not affect the Atma. This Atma never dies or takes birth, and the quagmire in which it has found itself in the present is due to its ignorance about this fundamental Truth of existence. Delusions, ignorance and their attendant hallucinations, vexations, perplexities, miseries and torments are tantamount to tying the creature in fetters because a bonded man is never at peace with himself no matter what material comforts he might be enjoying.]

Those who are tied to this fetter are the ones who are tormented and scared by the notion of duality or Dvaita in this world. [They are utterly confused as to what is true and what is false. They are not certain if the world they see and believe in is true or not, and whether the Atma actually exists. They are also not sure what kind of Mukti, or liberation and deliverance of the soul or Atma is known as the ‘final Mukti’ or the Kaivalya Mukti. They toss around and hop between theories and philosophies, never finding any firm ground to rest and have everlasting peace.]

When one becomes aware of the fact that one’s ‘true self’ is the pure consciousness and a personification of the supreme Truth of existence called the ‘Shiva Tattva’, that they are one and the same, it is then that he finds freedom from all sorts of fears and consternations. That is, when a wise and self-realised person realises that his ‘self’ is the universally conscious Atma which is the microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic Consciousness called Brahm, he feels a sense of great spiritual achievement as he would then have found or discovered the greatest of spiritual and metaphysical Truths in existence.

This eclectic knowledge and enlightenment steadies the spiritual aspirant by helping him focus on his own ‘self’, in his own Atma, which is the truthful essence

known as cosmic Consciousness that is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm or the ‘Shiva Tattva’ (30).

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 6, and Canto 4, verse no. 32 have this to say on the subject of Shiva principle—

“Canto 3, verse no. 6 =

“Canto 4, verse no. 32 = Shiva is the eternal Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and spiritual guide); Shiva is the Vedas personified; Shiva is revealed in the form of all the Gods; Shiva is the supreme Lord. [These stanzas can be interpreted as follows—the Guru is a manifestation of Shiva; the Vedas are embodiments of Shiva; the Gods are none other than Shiva revealed in their forms. Indeed, Shiva is the supreme Lord, the Supreme Being of creation.]

Since everything is Shiva, I too am Shiva. [That is, I am an embodiment of Shiva—the truthful one, the auspicious one, the beautiful one, the wise and enlightened one, the one who is renunciation personified, the eternal and infinite one, the Supreme Being himself in my form.] (32).”

The concept of ‘Shiva Tattwa’ has been expounded upon in the *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in verse nos. 5-6, 12-15 as follows—

“verse no. 5 = To bow before Govind (one of the numerous names of Vishnu) and pay obeisance to him is equivalent to bowing before Lord Shiva and paying obeisance to the latter (because they are both the same Divinity personified). Those who worship Vishnu (who rides the Gurud, the legendary heron of eagle) with devotion and reverence are indeed worshipping and showing reverence to Lord Shiva who rides a bull (5).

“verse no. 6 = Those who do not like the strange and unconventional form of Shiva as ‘Virupaksha’ that is very odd and inconsistent with the usually pleasant form of Vishnu, and therefore resent it and have aversion for it cannot hope to ever please Lord Janaardan (Vishnu, the compassionate Lord who is merciful towards his subjects, protects them and loves them). It is equivalent to having resentment for and aversion to Lord Janaardan himself¹.

Those who do not know the mysterious secrets of Rudra (Shiva) can never know the esoteric secrets of Keshav (Vishnu) as well; they are ignorant of who Vishnu actually is² (6).

[Note—¹This verse is a clear indication that both these Gods—Shiva and Vishnu—are to be treated alike and with the same degree of respect and honour. This proves the fact that this Upanishad aims at establishing harmony and goodwill between the worshippers of Vishnu and Shiva who were traditionally at odds with each other.

Shiva is called ‘Virupaksha’ because of his external appearances which are most odd and unconventional. He is depicted by the Purans as being naked, wearing only animal skin and having ash of the cremation ground smeared all over his body, has serpents wrapped all round him, eats intoxicating herbs and remains perpetually in an intoxicated state, lives in the cremation ground in the company of ghosts and phantoms, gets angry at the slightest provocation or pretext, etc. This external behaviour of the Lord is obviously at odds with that of Vishnu who is depicted in a flamboyant form with magnificent and colourful attire, fully decked up with priceless ornaments, having a charming demeanour, pleasant speech that offends none, good company, a regal abode in the heaven, and

always sporting an enchanting and benevolent smile captivating the heart of millions of his devotees as compared to the fear-instilling, grave and somber mood in which Shiva lives.

So this verse intends to enlighten the spiritual aspirant that he should not be misled by these and other such dichotomies and differences that exist in this creation, or the various forms in which the different godheads are depicted in the Purans and other texts, but peer underneath and see the reality and the truth that they represent. External appearance is no criterion to decide that one God is senior to the other, as this is necessary so that the concerned God can play his role in the cogwheel of creation perfectly. This wisdom, erudition and enlightenment would be called acquisition of 'true Gyan' or knowledge that is 'true' and 'enlightening' in the real sense.

The outwardly odd behaviour and fearful external appearance of Shiva which makes him 'Virupaksha' is misleading—for the simple reason that the Shiva is very enlightened and self-realised who has totally detached himself from worldly involvement and pleasures, and instead prefers to remain engrossed in meditation and contemplation. He has tasted the divine elixir of self-realisation and the peace that comes with meditation and contemplation, so is the least bothered by how he looks and what people think of him. He is an ascetic par-excellence. Hence he is always seen with closed or half-open eyes. His short temper is due to this trance-like state of his blissful inner self—for when his internal peace of meditation is disturbed by any kind of external disturbances, he gets extremely annoyed and exceedingly peeved. His staying in the cremation ground is indicative of his close acquaintance with or understanding of death which makes him totally aware of the perishable nature of life and the futility of pursuing it at the cost of liberation and deliverance of the soul. Since he constantly sees death in the face, no charms of this world can ever be sufficiently enticing as to trap him in its snare.

But does this mean that Vishnu is engrossed in enjoying this perishable world and is in any way less self-enlightened and divine than Shiva? Not the least; the Lord has to carry on with the function of sustenance and protection of this creation, and so has to adopt a posture that suits his job. He needs wealth and powers and authority to provide for the necessities of this creation, create prosperity for its future wellbeing, and maintain law and order in this creation. Shiva is only concerned with conclusion, so he can afford to maintain a distanced life style. That is also why Shiva is usually the patron God of ascetics and their like because they symbolise the last phase of life marked by total renunciation, spending time on meditation and contemplation, and generally preparing to face the ultimate truth that all material objects of this world are perishable and they have to be abandoned at the time of death. So a wise man should not hanker after them and get unduly perturbed and anxious for them at the internal level of his 'self'. At the most, they should be used to fulfill the obligations of existential life as and when they present themselves during the course of the soul's journey in this world, but not thought to be the truthful thing to be aimed at and achieved at any cost whatsoever. The world does not provide long-term bliss, peace and tranquility, and neither is it eternal and restful.

²Shiva stands for the last phase of life and is the manifestation of Brahm to bring about the conclusion of creation at the macro level, and of the individual in the form of the death of the body at the micro level of creation. What is the secret to be known? It is the fact that inspite of being the great God called 'Mahadev' who is most powerful and omnipotent, Shiva prefers to remain away from the limelight of creation. Iconographically, he has been depicted as being submerged in deep meditation and contemplation on his inner self. This indicates that he has learnt that true peace comes with realising the bliss emanating from the Atma, and not by remaining engrossed in the material world of sense objects which only create delusions and consternations. He is deemed to be the most enlightened God as indicated by the fact that he is the only one to

have the activated ‘third eye’ of wisdom located in the middle of the forehead between the eyebrows. Shiva remains submerged in the ecstasy and blissful state of Brahm realisation. Which brings us to the main point of this verse—that is, this Brahm upon whom Shiva meditates had manifested himself in the form of the Viraat Purush who is also known as Vishnu at the time of the first stages of creation. So Shiva is actually meditating upon Vishnu. This fact has been affirmed in the epic Ramayan where Lord Ram, an incarnation of Vishnu, calls the image of Shiva installed on the shores of the ocean before his departure for the conquest of Lanka and its demon king Ravana, as ‘Rameshwar’—literally meaning ‘the Lord of Ram’. It also means ‘One who’s Lord is Ram’. In other words, Ram as an incarnation of Vishnu is the Lord of Shiva, and vice versa.

Therefore, in the lexicon of metaphysics, Vishnu is the supreme Brahm upon whom Shiva meditates and remains engrossed in his memory. Shiva represents the extremely enlightened and dispassionate form of Brahm, whereas Vishnu stands for his more worldly manifestation that is engaged in affairs of creation and its maintenance. This Upanishad also asserts that the Jiva, the living being in his essential and truthful form as the Atma, the pure consciousness, is Ishwar or the supreme Lord personified—refer verse nos. 41-45 on the one hand, and on the other hand that this supreme Lord is no one else but Shiva—which is the basic theme around which this Upanishad is built. So, when it is said that Shiva meditates upon Vishnu it also implies that an enlightened man who has realised who he actually is worships the supreme Lord of creation known as Vishnu. It is easy for him to worship Vishnu than Shiva for one other reason. Vishnu had incarnated on several occasions and lived amongst humans, creating a legion of stories and worldly deeds that are well documented in the different Purans and Itihasas, such as the Bhagwat Maha Puran and the epic Ramayan that the ordinary man can read, find practical to follow and easy to relate to because they describe to him things and circumstances and the world with which he is very much acquainted and which is the one that is causing him all the problems in the first place.]

“verse no. 12 = The Antaraatma is Brahma the creator, Parmatma is Maheshwar (literally the ‘Great God’ but meaning Shiva), and the universal and eternal Atma is Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation (12).

[Note—The Anataaraatma is the consciousness residing in the bosom of all living beings as their own individual Atma. It forms the core of the inner self, the individual creature in his true form. This can be roughly translated as the sub-conscious mind that directs the conscious mind to act. Since it is the mind that creates this world by its imaginative powers and then believes it to be true, it is said that the Antaraatma is the creator of the physical visible world, or is equivalent to Brahma who created this world by using his mind. This is because Brahma had the technical knowledge that was required for this process, and knowledge and its application is the function of the mind and intellect.

The Parmatma is of course the Supreme Being, the Lord of all that exists. Hence, he is ‘the Great God’ or Maheshwar. He remains in a passive state of meditation and perpetual contemplation as symbolised by Shiva.

Finally, Vishnu is the Atma because he symbolically represents the Viraat Purush and displays all the unique characteristic qualities of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic invisible Lord of creation from whom the three visible Gods—viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—emerged. So therefore, Viraat is like the soul and the basis upon which the entire edifice of this creation is built, and who is at the very foundation of creation of these Trinity Gods.]

“verse no. 13 = This creation as a whole is like a huge tree¹. The three parts of this creation are known as the three worlds (celestial, terrestrial and nether or subterranean), and they are like its outstretched branches. [Refer verse no. 41 also.]

The upper part of this cosmic tree is represented by Vishnu. Its middle part (trunk) is represented by Brahma. And its roots are represented by Maheshwar (Shiva symbolising the supreme Brahm)² (13).

[Note—¹The metaphor of the *tree* has been employed in Katho-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no.1 also to describe the creation.

²The upper and outer branches of a tree spread out in the sun and their leaves absorb sunlight and carry on photosynthesis. The branches give shelter to so many forms of fauna and animal life—birds, flies, insects, centipedes and reptiles etc. (e.g. the caterpillar, snakes, squirrels, lizards etc.). This is a clear symbolism of the functions of *Vishnu* who is assigned the task of sustenance and giving protection to the creation.

The trunk and central branches stand for *Brahma* the creator because it is out of this central core that the outer branches and leaves and flowers emerge and spread out. In the case of the huge Banyan tree it is seen that these branches produce secondary trees by first touching the ground and then transforming this apparent prop into a stem or trunk of the second spread. It is symbolic way of how Brahma unfolded the creation and then let it spread out on its own and reproduce itself. The trunk of the tree is a link between the upper part bearing the leaves, fruits and flowers, and the root that anchors the whole structure to the ground and absorbs nourishment from the soil. The trunk helps the nourishment absorbed by the root to be taken and distributed equally to all the distant parts of a huge tree. In other words, Brahma the creator is that aspect of the supreme transcendental Brahm (the ultimate Absolute Truth and cosmic Consciousness) that helped to reveal the existence of the latter when he unfolded the multicoloured and multifarious vast creation which is so infinite, varied and unique that it defies all definition, narration and imagination.

The visible aspect of the world is like the unfolding of the upper part of the tree consisting of the stem, fruit, leaves and flowers, while the root is like the Viraat Purush from whom the entire creation evolved. The seed which is the ‘basic cause’ of the entire structure coming into existence, including the root, is like Brahm. At a slightly grosser level of evolutionary ladder, the three Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva would represent the trunk, the root, the flowers and the fruits depending upon how one interprets this analogy. For instance, Brahma made this visible creation possible and laid down its foundation; hence he is like the trunk as well as the root. Vishnu sustains and takes care of the world; hence he is like the root which absorbs nourishment and the trunk which distributes this nourishment to all the parts of the tree. Shiva is like the leaves, flowers and fruits because they lend beauty to the tree, are its essence and auspicious reward, and produce the seed from the next tree would be born along with the sign of the tree’s final years of its life-cycle.

Since it is the root that is at the foundation of the entire edifice, it can also be compared to Maheshwar—the great God who is the anchor of everything in existence. Had it not been for the root, the tree would not have come into existence in the first place. The root anchors the tree and prevents it getting uprooted in the fiercest of storms. The tree draws its basic nutrients from the ground through the root. Without the root, there would be no tree. Even if the tree is cut on its upper side but its roots remain intact, it would regenerate itself.]

“verse no. 14 = Vishnu personifies the auspicious objective or aim of doing anything. Brahma represents the actual process of doing deeds or giving effect to one’s plans. And

Maheshwar stands for the cause behind anything that happens, or occurrence of any circumstance that requires action to be taken and deeds to be done (14).

[Note—*Vishnu* signifies that the aim of any deed should be righteousness and auspiciousness. This aim ensures that the deed is done in a righteous and auspicious manner and subsequently bears good results and fosters all round happiness and goodwill for the creature in life. When this does not happen, the creation suffers. This is why when unrighteousness represented by the evil forces of creation personified by Demons are in the ascendance, Vishnu incarnates himself as one or the other incarnations to slay these Demons and restore order and the virtues of righteousness and auspiciousness in creation.

Brahma is the godhead that actually took necessary actions to initiate the process of creation of the physical world once the Viraat Purush had decided to do so. Therefore, Brahma symbolises the virtues of implementing decisions and taking appropriate actions so one's dreams and aspirations can be fulfilled. Brahma also created the vast repositories of knowledge in the form of the Vedas, indicating that it is not only sufficient to do deeds but more importantly to do them in the correct manner.

Finally, *Shiva* stands for the end of life, the culmination of one's efforts and ensuring a good end. Obviously, no one would want to ruin one's future and die in sufferings, pains and agonies. So Shiva is the cause which would indirectly propel a person to do things righteously and with due diligence. Again, one can reach an end only when there is a beginning, for without a start there cannot be an end. Therefore, Shiva indirectly is the 'cause of the beginning' so there can be an ultimate 'end'. Shiva inspires a person to make an auspicious beginning immediately with the averred aim of finding eternal peace and happiness for one's self.

Shiva is the patron God of ascetics, hermits and mendicants because he symbolises a high degree of self-realisation, renunciation, dispassion, wisdom and enlightenment. When a man becomes enlightened and self-realised, he sees the futility of pursuing this world and decides to renounce it by taking the vow of Sanyas, or the life of renunciation and detachment from the material world. This is literally a new beginning, a new life for him. It is a life of awakening and self-realisation which leads to liberation and deliverance as opposed to the earlier life of delusions and entrapments.

Shiva is the patron God of death implying the end of all delusions and bondages to this body and the material world, and the beginning of a new life spiritual freedom marked by self-realisation and enlightenment.]

“verse no. 15 = Dharma (the virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety) personifies Rudra. The Jagat (the world, both the animate and the inanimate) is a symbolic representation of Vishnu. And Gyan (knowledge, wisdom and erudition) stands for Brahm (15).”

1.6 The symbolic abode of Shiva in the body—

Reference: Body as an abode of Lord Shiva—(i) The Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 72, 165-168, Canto 2, verse nos. 6-10, 20, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-15, Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5, 13-16, and Canto 6, verse nos. 32-33, 47; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 50 and 53; and Skand Upanishad, verse nos. 10-11. (ii) Sam Veda's Jabal Darshan Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 48-59. (iii) Atharva Veda's Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 7, verse no. 4.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 5, verse nos. 50 and 53 describe Shiva's symbolic abode in the body in the Mooladhar Chakra (at the lower end of the body) and the region of the head (forehead) respectively.

Now let us see what these two verses say.

“verse no. 50 = The Mooladhar Chakra is triangular in shape and is located between the anus and the genital organ. The supreme Shiva in the subtle form of a ‘Bindu’ (drop or point source of cosmic dynamic energy represented by the sperm and the vital energy restricted in the Kundalini) is located here. It is from here that he shines and illuminates the surroundings (50).

“verse no. 53 = The area between the throat and the cranium is called the ‘Shambhav’ or the abode of Lord Shiva. [That is, it is this area of the body where auspicious wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment along with intellectual skills and erudition have their seat, all of which are symbolic of Shiva, the Supreme Brahm personified.] (53).”

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Brahman 7, verse no. 4 says that when one wears the sacred ash of the fire sacrifice, called the Bhasma, on one's body, all the pores of the body become as holy as Shiva Lingams. To quote—“King Janak asked sage Yagyavalkya once again—‘What are the benefits of wearing the Bhasma?’

The sage replied—‘By wearing (smearing of) the Bhasma on the body, all the pores of the body from where the hair follicles emerge become de-facto Shiva Lingams. [The ‘Shiva Lingam’ is a symbol of Lord Shiva and is shaped like an erect cylinder which is encircled by a rounded horizontal flat platform at its base. This Shiva Lingam is consecrated in all the shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva. In the present case, by saying that each pore of the body of the wearer of Bhasma becomes a Shiva Lingam, it is meant that the whole body, the entire being of the wearer, becomes holy and sanctified, and it becomes a de-facto shrine of the Lord. It is to emphasize the profound sanctifying and purifying powers of the sacred Bhasma.]

Since the sacred Bhasma is rubbed on the whole body, and since each pore of the body has become a Shiva Lingam, it follows that the spiritual rewards of wearing the sacred Bhasma on the body is equivalent to offering the Bhasma to as many physical Shiva Lingams in temples of Lord Shiva.

All the sections of the society, whether they are Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas or Shudras, get the same auspicious benefits and blessings, the same grace and benediction by wearing the sacred Bhasma as are got by offering it in a shrine of Lord Shiva’ (4).”

1.7 The Shiva Loka, the celestial abode of Shiva—

The *Devipuran Mahabagwat*, Canto 43 describes the ‘Shiva Loka’ in terms used in ancient mythological histories known as the Purnas. It is described along with the abodes of other Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Vishnu the sustainer of creation, and Brahma the creator. Their locations have been mentioned specifically in verse nos. 9-10, 13, 17, 22, and 25 are as follows—

“Verse nos. 9-10 - The netherworld (subterranean world), the terrestrial world, the heaven and the Brahma Lok (residence of Brahma)—they progressively extend out in consecutive layers (i.e. in concentric circles) far deep into the recesses of the boundless universe (9).

Brahma Lok is situated in the outer layer (i.e. on the fringes) of the universe, and further afield from it, at a distance of 1 lakh Yojans (1 Yojan = 8 miles; hence, at a distance of 8 Lakh, or roughly 8 hundred thousand miles), is the Shiva Lok (abode of Shiva) which is faultless, sinless, healthy and divine (10).

“Verse no. 13 = 1 lakh Yojans (8 hundred thousand miles) higher than the Shiva’s abode is the Vishnu’s Loka where he (Vishnu) resides with Kamla (Laxmi). He holds a conch, a discus, a mace and a divine lotus in his hands (13).

“Verse no. 17 = To the left of the Shiva’s abode is the most pleasant and enchanting ‘Gauri Loka’, which is adorned with a large treasure-trove of strange and magnificent gems such as rubies etc. (17).

“Verse no. 22 = Better and more magnificent than all the ‘Brahma Lokas’ put together, endowed with a divine ethereal illumination, most marvelous, glorious and pure is the ‘Goloka’ where Sri Krishna resides with Radha (22).

“Verse no. 25 = Fifty crore Yojans above it (1 crore = 10 million; 1 Yojan = 8 miles) is the divine abode of the great Goddess where she resides most secretly (25).”

1.8 Dakshina-Mukhi/Dashina-Murti Shiva—

Iconographically, this form of Dakshin Murti Shiva has other names also besides ‘Dakshina-Murti’, such as ‘Dakshina-Mukhi’ and ‘Dakshinaa Murti’.

The word ‘Murti’ means a ‘form or image’, the word ‘Mukhi’ means ‘facing’, the word ‘Dakshinaa’ means ‘giving away liberally as charity or donation’, the word ‘Dakshin’ has three connotations here—viz. ‘south’, ‘right’ and ‘knowledge and wisdom’, and the word ‘Shiva’ of course means ‘someone who is a personification of such glorious virtues as auspiciousness, beauty, truth, knowledge, enlightenment, wisdom, renunciation, dispassion and detachment from all things material and false, meditative and contemplative, self-realised and Brahm-realised etc.’

So we have a comprehensive picture of what this Upanishad aims to worship—it does not aim to worship Lord Shiva as the God of death and destruction but as the most enlightened and wise teacher of the philosophy of Brahm whom he personifies. Since Lord Shiva faced ‘south’ when he taught the ancient sages and seers who had approached him in some earlier time to gain divine wisdom and metaphysical knowledge which only he could impart to them, he was known as ‘the Lord facing south’. Since the knowledge imparted by him was astoundingly unique and the most ‘right or correct and precise knowledge’ of metaphysics which granted ‘a divine wisdom as well as vision’ to its followers, it was called ‘Dakshin’. Since he was liberal in giving it to the sincere spiritual aspirant, he was called ‘Dakshina-Murti’ or the ‘one who is an icon of charity and donation, one who is very generous in giving away what is asked for without holding anything away from the alms seeker’.

What did he give away? He gave away ‘knowledge and divine wisdom’, and only one who has something can give it to others, therefore he is deemed to be a ‘Murti’, or an

image, a personified form of such knowledge and divine wisdom. The word 'Dakshinaa' means 'giving charity and making donation', while 'Mukha' means 'mouth'. In other words, Lord Shiva has been extremely liberal and magnanimous in giving away whatever he has, and in this particular case he has given away knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the non-dual reality of the 'self' as a personification of Brahm. Since teaching is done by the 'mouth', hence this donation and charity that he made was through the mouth, entitling him to be called 'Dakshinaa Mukhi'.

In other words, the Dakshin Murti is the form of Shiva as a wise teacher and preacher of divine knowledge which is meant to make the disciple aware of the actual principles and the truth in this world that exists behind the arcade of falsehood that is so typical of it. This knowledge enables him to attain a state of eternity and blessedness marked by eternal peace, happiness, beatitude and felicity. It's the correct and auspicious path to self and Brahm realisation.

There is an Upanishad called *Dakshina-Murti* belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which is exclusively dedicated to this form of Lord Shiva. It describes five forms of Shiva in its verse nos. 7-8 which describe the first form and its worship, verse nos. 9-10 which describe the second form and its worship, verse nos. 11-13 which describe the third form and its worship, verse nos. 14-15 which describe the fourth form and its worship, and verse nos. 16-17 which describe the first form and its worship.

1.9 Rudra—This is the angry form of Lord Shiva that brings about the end of creation—

There are eleven Rudras. References— (i) Atharva Veda's Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 6, verse no. 12; Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3.

The *eleven Rudras* are actually eleven subtle forms of Lord Shiva. According to the Srimad Bhagvat, 3/12/12, they are in the forms of Gods as follows—(i) Mannu, (ii) Manu, (iii) Mahinas, (iv) Mahaan, (v) Shiv, (vi) Ritdwaj, (vii) Ugraretaa, (viii) Bhav, (ix) Kaal, (x) Vaamdeo, and (xi) Dhritvrat. The eleven Rudras appear in Rig Veda 1/43/1, and Taiteriya Brahman 3/4/9/7. They are regarded as the father of the Wind God or the Maruts (Rig Veda, 2/33/1). The word Rudra literally means one who is angry, terrible and wrathful. Amongst the Rudras, Lord Shiva is regarded as the most senior and enlightened.

According to Vishnu Puran, Ansha (Part) 1, Canto 8, verse nos. 1-11, when the creator Brahma wished to create a son in his own likeness, a child with a blue (purple) tone of the skin (resembling the colour of the sky) was born. The infant began crying aloud and running here and there. At his behaviour, Brahma named the child 'Rudra'—one who cries aloud and causes a nuisance. The child cried again and again seven times, and to calm him down Brahma gave him newer names.

This is how the word 'Rudra' originated. The other names are Bhava, Sharva, Ishaan, Pashupati, Bhim, Ugra and Mahaadev. The other names are Lohitaanga, Manojavaa and Skanda.

According to Shiva Puran, Rudra Sanhita, 18/20-27, Lord Shiva assumed the form of eleven sons of sage Kashyap and his wife Surabhi to fulfill their wish. The names of

these eleven manifestations of Shiva are the following—Kapaali, Pingal Bhim, Virupaaksha, Vilohit, Shaastaa, Ajapad, Ahir-burdhanya, Shambhu, Chanda and Bhava.

The various other names assigned to the eleven Rudras according to different Purans are the following—Har, Bahuroop, Trayambak, Aparaaajeet, Shambhu, Vrishakapi, Kapardi, Raivat, Mrigvyadh, Sharva, and Kapaali.

The word ‘Rudra’, and its various connotations—

The word ‘Rudra’ is another name of Lord Shiva. This term has been defined in *Atharvashir Upanishad* of Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 4 as follows—“Why is he (Brahm) called ‘Rudra’? It is because the esoteric and secret form and nature of Brahm which is most enigmatic and difficult to understand is easily known by enlightened and self-realised Rishis who are exalted and wise sages, seers and ascetics; the knowledge of Brahm as Rudra is within their easy reach and grasp. On the other hand, this knowledge is very difficult for others to access. [It must be noted here that the difference between the two terms ‘Brahm’ and ‘Rudra’ lies in the degree of subtlety. While Brahm is the neutral divinity, its active and dynamic manifestation or its dynamic principle is known as Rudra. Brahm in itself does not do anything, and being a neutral entity is best addressed by the pronoun ‘it’ just as we would address light, sky, air, water, fire, earth etc. with the pronoun ‘it’. On the other hand, when this Brahm lost its neutrality and got engaged in activity of creating this world and regulating it, Rudra came into being. This Rudra is the dynamic form of Brahm. Rudra is less subtle as compared to Brahm, but otherwise they refer to the same divine Being who is supreme and transcendental in creation. Since Rudra is deemed to be ‘male’ aspect of creation—not because of any gender superiority or gender bias but because the initial ‘spark’ of life in the form of a ‘sperm’ can only be provided by a male—he is addressed as ‘he’ and not as ‘it’. Rudra is one of the names of Shiva, and this Lord is the patron God of Rishis who do meditation. Shiva is the greatest moral preacher, teacher and preceptor of spiritual knowledge⁴. Shiva is an exemplary renunciate and he himself remains eternally engrossed in meditation and contemplation. He teaches the Rishis who spend their time in meditation and contemplation about the Truth of Brahm. These Rishis repeat the Mantras of Brahm known as OM while meditating, and this brings them closer to the principal that this OM represents. They are totally immune to and free from all sorts of spiritual contaminations and hurdles that an ordinary man faces while remaining engrossed in the affairs of the material world and the temptations proffered by its sense objects which is hard to resist if not impossible. That is why the term ‘difficult’ is used for ordinary creatures when it comes to their realising the truth of Brahm—i.e. though it is not impossible it is nevertheless hard and difficult.”

Rudra is the angry form of Lord Shiva. The word means ‘the terrible one; the angry and ruthless one; one who roars and thunders; one who makes the enemy weep; one who destroys this trans-migratory world of birth and death; one who destroys ignorance and delusions; one who eliminates evil and perversions.’

Rudra is a Vedic deity and has been eulogized in three full Suktas (hymns) dedicated to him. These are Rig Veda’s 1/114/1-11; 2/33/1-15, and Yajur Veda’s 16/1-66. Besides these Suktas, Rudra is honoured as a deity at a number of places in the

Vedas—viz. Rig Veda—1/43/1-4, 5/42/11, 7/46/1-4, 7/59/12; Atharva Veda—5/6/3-4, 6/55/2-3, 7/92/1, 11/2; and Yajur Veda—11/54.

Rudra is regarded as the father of Marut, the Wind God (Rig Veda, 2/33/1). Rudra assumes many forms—usually it is eleven forms (Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/4/9/7), but sometimes they are also said to be thirty-three in number (Taittiriya Sanhita, 1/4/11/1). Rudra is regarded as having a close relationship with Agni, the Fire God (Shatpath Brahman, 5/2/4/13). The Padma Puran, Swargakhanda, Chapter 8 mentions only eight Rudras. These eight, eleven or thirty-three forms of Rudra might mean as many aspects of Shiva.

However, in terms of the Upanishads, the eleven Rudras stand for the ten vital winds called Prans + one Mana or mind. The ten Prans are five chief Prans such as Pran (breath), Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyaana, and five subsidiary Prans such as Nag, Kurma, Krikan, Devdutta and Dhananjay. [Refer—Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 55^{1/2}-57 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

Rudra is said to have created such mythological figures as Bhuts (ghosts), Pretas (disembodied spirits), Pishacha (goblins), Khusmaandas (malignant imps).

In iconography, he has been depicted as wearing long tresses coiled on the head, has strong powerful arms, has a body decorated variously with serpents or priceless ornaments, and holds a strong and invincible bow and arrow as well as a thunderbolt. When necessary, he becomes ferocious and charges at his enemies on a chariot or on foot, while at the other times he is full of mercy and compassion. He is closely associated with forests and mountains, and is also the patron deity of herbs and medicinal plants. Hence, he is the killer of diseases and a great healer. Here, 'healing' would mean spiritual healing rather than physical ailments afflicting a creature.

He destroys sins and evil tendencies in the world, and grants the boon of liberation and happiness.

According to the epic Mahabharata, Anushasanparva, Chapter 14, it is Shiva in the form of Rudra who destroys this creation at the end of one cycle of creation.

The *Sharav Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its verse no. 6, describes Rudra as Sharav—the killer or destroyer. In this Upanishad, Lord Shiva had assumed this form to liberate Vishnu from the form of Nrisingh (a half man and half lion form) which the Lord had taken to kill the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting the devotees of Vishnu to such an extent that he did not spare even his son Prahalad. After slaying this demon, Nrisingh roamed around in the forests striking terror in other creatures. It was then that Shiva, the universal Lord who has been honoured with the epithet of 'Mahadev' as he is the greatest and supreme God, had assumed the form of Sharav, the killer, and liberated Vishnu from the body of Nrisingh. Thus liberated, Vishnu had thanked him a lot and went to his divine abode called Vaikunth. So this ferocious form of Shiva known as Sharav was also called 'Rudra', the angry and ferocious form of the Lord. One can imagine the fight that might have raged between Nrisingh and Rudra, and obviously Rudra must have been more ferocious than Nrisingh in order to subdue the latter.

There is another connotation of the word 'Sharav'. The word literally means the killer or slayer. In other words, Sharav is that form of the Supreme Being which instills fear in the heart of evil and pervert creatures, and kills or eliminates their evil tendencies.

The word also refers to 'the Lord who shines in the heart of his devotees' as their Atma or pure consciousness.

The creature or the embodied soul is called 'Shar' or the form of the ethereal spirit that has assumed a gross physical body having a head. One who cuts off the head is known as 'Sharav'. The head is a metaphor for pride and ego and their accompanying traits of hypocrisy, haughtiness and arrogance. It is in the head that all evil planning is done, and it is the head that inspires the creature to indulge in all sorts of vices and inauspicious deeds. When this happens, the great God, the Parameshwar, makes it sure that the soul of such a creature is liberated from the sinful body in which it has been trapped by killing the gross body and liberating the soul.

So, while on the surface it appears to be a physical fight between two powerful creatures, one being the Shar and the other being the Sharav, here referring to Nrisingh and Rudra respectively, it is actually a system evolved by Nature whereby evil and perversions are kept under check. It is a system instituted by the Supreme Being himself to regulate and maintain balance, order and law in his creation. Though Nrisingh was Lord Vishnu himself in that form, the latter forgot who he actually was once the Lord had assumed a physical form. This is the effect of Maya—the overwhelming power of delusions that automatically comes with having a gross body like that of ordinary creatures. This situation also highlights the reason why all the creatures are under the overpowering control of Maya—if Maya can delude Vishnu to forget about who he is and wander in the forests as some cruel creature in his form as Nrisingh then it is little wonder that ordinary creatures are held under the overpowering sway of Maya.

Now, who would liberate such primarily innocent souls trapped by Maya, and who would provide protection to other innocent creatures who are being subjected to torments by this single deluded and evil-possessed soul? Naturally it is their supreme Father who is very merciful and who is greatly pained at the predicament in which his off springs, the creatures, find themselves in. So this Father intervenes not only to free the trapped soul in the evil body, but also to provide succour and solace to other creatures who are being tormented by this single individual.

Thus, the Parameshwar assumed the form of Sharav or Rudra to liberate Vishnu from the evil body of Nrisingh.

The *Devi Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 4 says that the Rudras are manifestations of the Mother Goddess, who actually represents the dynamism of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being. The Goddess is the energy, authority and powers of Brahm that are employed by the latter to create and control this creation, both at the macrocosmic level as well as the microcosmic level.

The Rudra is this dynamism of Brahm revealed at the macrocosmic level.

Lord Shiva has eleven forms, and one of them is 'Rudra', which literally means anger, wrath and vehemence. The Lord is considered to be the most enlightened of the Trinity Gods, and is therefore called 'Maheshwar'. He always remains in a meditative posture, always contemplating and meditating on the supreme Soul and the Truth. But still he shows anger and mercilessness, because one of his tasks is to punish the evil and sinful ones by ruthlessly slaying them in order to protect the good and righteous souls in the creation. Further, when his meditation and peace is disturbed he also becomes angry. He remains aloof and disinterested in the world, because he is very wise and enlightened, and he stays in the form of an ascetic. Ordinary people think that he is proud, arrogant

and haughty because he does not give a damn to worldly formalities and niceties of behaviour. Shiva's failure to conform to set norms of proper and sane conduct makes him look most odd God.

The word 'Rudra', which is literally used as a metaphor for anger, wrath, vehemence and cussedness, is in fact a very misleading title for Shiva because there are a number of great Upanishads which describe Rudra as none but the Supreme Being known as the transcendental Brahm from whom the entire creation has emerged, who sustains it and in whom the creation would finally collapse. It is this Brahm in the form of Rudra who is treated at the supreme Lord God of creation, and hence is called Maheshwar. The *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition and *Atharvashir Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition are exclusively dedicated to this theme. The *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes the esoteric significance of the Shiva Tattva or the essential knowledge of Shiva who is the greatest Guru or moral preceptor and teacher of the creatures.

The *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 4/33 says that the eleven Rudras are manifestations of Lord Ram who himself is the supreme transcendental Brahm. In other words, Lord Ram had assumed the form of Rudra or Shiva in order to bring this creation to conclusion.

The *Atharvashir Upanishad* of Atharva Veda is especially relevant here because it explains the various epithets used to describe the virtues and glories of the supreme transcendental Brahm by Lord Rudra himself, and upon close reading it would be very clear that Rudra is describing Brahm when he describes himself.

The *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its Brahman 1, verse no. 3 says that the Rudras, along with the Vasus and Adityas etc., were born out of the third step of the divine Anushtup Chanda in which the Mantra of Lord Nrisingh was revealed to the creator Brahma when he did severe Tapa in order to initiate the process of creation.

The *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1, and Canto 2, paragraph nos. 3, 6-8 assert that Lord Rudra, also known as Lord Shiva, is the Supreme Being himself.

The *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 3-4, 7-11, 15 elucidates upon the 'Rudra Tattva' or the essential principles of the concept of Rudra from metaphysical perspective.

Let us quote Rudra Hridaya Upanishad to learn about this eclectic concept of 'Rudra Tattva' as follows—

“verse no. 3 = ‘All the Gods are incorporated in the divine form of Lord Rudra (a form of Shiva) and they are different manifestations of this one Lord known as Rudra. In other words, Rudra personifies all the divine virtues in creation represented or symbolised by all the Gods independently and jointly.

On the right of Rudra¹ are established the three Gods such as Surya (the Sun God), Brahma (the creator of visible creation as well as of the Vedas), and the three forms of Agni³ (the Fire God; the three sacred fires). [There is great significance in this statement. Brahma the creator, the Sun God and the Fire God are all metaphors for and harbingers of life and creation; they stand as symbols of vitality and life-infusing energy. Brahma is personified Supreme Being (Brahm) as the grandfather and patriarch of visible creation who not only created the creatures but all the knowledge and codes needed for

proper regulation of this creation even for time in infinite future. The Sun is an evident source of the basic requirements of life such as light, heat and warmth; the Sun regulates the seasons and the year as well as the cycle of day and night. Its importance can be fathomed from the fact that plant photosynthesis depends directly upon its light and heat, and all forms of life depend on plants, directly or indirectly, for food without which life would be extinct. We know that one primary reason why the dinosaurs vanished from earth is the blocking out of sunlight due to dust that was raised when a meteor hit earth long time ago. Not only this, the very existence of earth depends upon the Sun because it keeps the earth from spinning out of control and getting lost in the bottomless void of the cosmos by its gravitational pull which helps the earth to remain firmly tethered to its position without any other thing to support its position in an empty void of space. Similarly, 'Fire' is an important aspect of life—it provides the necessary heat and warmth without which no life is imaginable on earth. The fire is present inherently in the earth itself, and it is the fire that helps the earth to harbour life in all its myriad variations. That the 'fire' and 'life' are synonymous with each other is proved when a man dies and his body becomes cold. As long as this body is warm, it is deemed that vestiges of life remain in it and when it becomes 'dead cold' it is a clear sign that the man has died. Fire is needed to cook food, to digest this food, to produce food, to keep the body warm, and so on and so forth that its importance need not be emphasized at length. If fact, these three godheads—Brahma, Sun and Fire—are the symbolic Trinity Gods who bring about the existence of creation into effect.] (3).

[Note—¹Lord Shiva has eleven forms called *Rudras*. Please refer to Section 1 of this book.

Lord Shiva is considered to be the most enlightened of the Trinity Gods, and is therefore called *Maheshwar*. He always remains in a meditative posture, always contemplating and meditating on the supreme Soul and the Truth. But still he shows anger and mercilessness, because one of his tasks is to punish the evil and sinful ones by ruthlessly slaying them in order to protect the good and righteous souls in the creation. Further, when his meditation and peace is disturbed he also becomes angry. He remains aloof and disinterested in the world, because he is very wise and enlightened, and he stays in the form of an ascetic. Ordinary people think that he is proud, arrogant and haughty because he does not give a damn to worldly formalities and niceties of behaviour. Shiva's failure to conform to set norms of proper and sane conduct makes him look most odd God. The word 'Rudra' is used as a metaphor for anger, wrath, vehemence and cussedness.

One of the other names of Rudra is *Kalagni-Rudra* which literally means Lord Shiva, the concluder, in his most ferocious form which is like the fire of dooms-day. Shiva is the greatest ascetic, a great renunciate, most auspicious and regarded as an enlightened God. So his invocation helps the spiritual seeker to burn all his worldly delusions and taints arising out of ignorance and attachments to falsehoods. This paves the path for his ultimate liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Lord Shiva is the designated Authority that controls death and destruction, not only of the gross physical world and its visible objects but also metaphorically of all the evil tendencies, all the blemishes and faults that are characteristic of this deluding world and which usually cover the soul of the creature like a layer of thick scum floating on the surface of the otherwise crystal-clear waters of the mountain lake.

The Rudraaksha beads (seeds of the tree *eleocarpus ganitrus*) with five faces or surfaces used in rosaries and necklaces are also called Kalagni-rudra beads because these are very much liked by Lord Shiva.

Refer 'Rudraaksha Jabal Upanishad' of the Sam Veda tradition, and 'Kalagni Rudra Upanishad' of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

²The three fires referred to here are the following—(a) 'Garhyapatya' fire—i.e. the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies), (b) 'Dakshinagni' fire—i.e. the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end, and (c) 'Ahawaniya' fire—i.e. the fire lit to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice.]

'verse no. 4 = To the left of him (Rudra) are established the three divine entities such as Goddess Uma (the divine consort of Shiva, also known by her more famous name of Parvati), Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of creation) and Som (the Moon God). [Earlier verse no. had narrated what was to the 'right of Rudra'. Now this verse describes what is to his 'left'. In other words, Rudra is in the center, and these Trinity divinities are to his right and left just like we have the right and the left hands on either sides of the torso. This is to say that these Trinity Gods help Rudra to carry out his functions of creation, sustenance and conclusion of creation. Uma is a Goddess personifying the dynamic power and energy of Brahm, in this case personified as Rudra or Shiva, to actually implement his decision to create and then not only carry it out effectively but exercise effective control over the vast creation which would have become unmanageable had Brahm not exercised his overall controlling and veto powers. She represents the female aspect of creation, and therefore is called the cosmic Mother. In this role she is depicted as the divine consort of Shiva because the latter is Brahm, the cosmic Father, personified. Once the creation was conceived in Uma's womb and later on when it emerged in the form of the visible world as we know it now necessitated an arrangement for its perpetual sustenance, nourishment and protection. This Brahm did in his manifestation as Vishnu. Som literally is the soothing elixir of life and eternity—and it is appropriate to use this as an epithet for Vishnu in his role as the sustainer and protector of creation. There is another way of looking at the concept of 'Som'. Since the latter is also the drink drunk during fire sacrifices and by the Gods as it provides bliss and ecstasy, and its physical form resembles the viscous fluid responsible for creation, i.e. the male semen, it is likened to these feelings during the course of sexual intercourse when the male semen is implanted in the female sexual organ as a necessary part of the process of creation. Since Vishnu is also the Viraat Purush from whom the entire creation is said to have come into existence, and he had done the cosmic fire sacrifice in order to set this chain reaction in motion, the epithet of Som for Vishnu is most apt.]

Uma is Lord Vishnu¹, and Vishnu is Som², the Moon God. [That is, all these three are the different manifestations of the same Divinity revealed in different forms according to the needs of the circumstance in creation as described above.] (4).

[Note—¹Lord *Vishnu* stands for the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme Brahm from whom the rest of the creation emerged. Since Brahm is neutral and does not do anything, so when he decided to initiate the process of creation he used his inherent power, authority and energy to kick-start the process. This 'dynamic energy, strength, vitality, power and stamina' of Brahm manifested itself in the form of Shakti known as Prakriti. The latter revealed itself in a grosser form as Uma or Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva when the Viraat Purush assumed the form of the Trinity Gods.

Therefore by extension, the divine husband of Uma, i.e. Shiva, is Vishnu by another name. *Uma* is the dynamic principle of Brahm in the latter's manifestation as Vishnu.

²*Moon God* is said to be the custodian of Amrit, the elixir of eternal life drunk by gods. More importantly, this elixir represents the primary life-infusing vital fluid (semen) that was used by Brahm to implant his spark (sperm) in the womb of Prakriti (Mother Nature) to initiate the process of creation. In other words, this Moon God was symbolically a personification of Vishnu's vital life-infusing and life-sustaining abilities in the form of the white cosmic semen. That is also why the moon is white like the semen.

The Moon God is known as 'Chandrama' in Sanskrit, and he appears first in the Rig Veda, 10/85/19). He is the patron God of night. His origin is in the Mana (heart and mind; the emotions and thoughts) of the Parmatma or the supreme Lord (the Viraat Purush or Vishnu) (Yajur Veda, 31/12; Taittiriya Brahman, 3/10/8/5). His existence depends upon the Sun God. On the dark night, he is supposed to enter the Sun (Aiteriya Brahman, 8/28). Chandrama is synonymous with Som, the divine elixir and sanctified drink drunk during the religious sacrifices as it gives its drinker peace and a long life (Kaushatiki Brahman, 16/5; Aiteriya Brahman, 7/11). He is the controller of seasons and months; he always changes so appear to be like a new born everyday. He gives peace and long life to the 'Stota', the chanter of hymns as prayers (Rig Veda, 10/85/19).

Chandra or the Moon Gods appears in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—10/85/19; Yajur Veda—1/28; Atharva Veda—6/78/1-2; 19/1.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes this Moon as being as the symbolic form of the water element. The moon is said to be the celestial pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss that is drunk by the Gods. In the human body, it is represented by the Eda Naadi passing through the left nostrils and which is used during do Pranayam. [Refer Canto 1, verse 166.] It is also present as the crescent moon, the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra, which is said to be the shape of the water element of which the patron deity is Vishnu, the sustainer of creation, and located from the knee to the hip region. [Refer Canto 1, verse 176 and Canto 5, verse no. 13.] At other places it describes the symbolic importance of creating a union of the moon and sun as metaphor for the union of the creature with the supreme Brahm. [Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 56 and 68 for instance.] In the context of Pranayam it is used to indicate the bliss obtained by the ascetic. [Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 120, 127.]

Canto 1, verse no. 133 of this Upanishad describes the great Mantra 'So-a-ham' and asserts that the moon stands for the letter 'sa' of this Mantra. Other instances where moon appears in Yogshikha Upanishad are Canto 1, verse nos. 133, 146, 176, Canto 3, verse no. 11, and Canto 6, verse no. 4.]

“verse no. 7 = Rudra symbolises the 'Beej' or seed (represented by the sperm) which is the basic unit carrier of life, while Janaardan (Vishnu) stands for the cosmic womb in which this Beej is planted in order to develop the embryo of creation¹.

Rudra is Brahma the creator, and the latter is Fire God himself². [Refer verse no. 3 above.] (7).

[Note—¹That is why the Viraat Purush, the subtler form of Vishnu, is said to have done the initial fire sacrifice and implanted the spark of creation in his own self. The one and the same entity became known as the male Viraat Purush and the female Prakriti by a very subtle polarization of virtues. This is the primary form of asexual reproduction when the Viraat Purush produced the Prakriti out of his own self.

With this holistic view-point, it is easy to understand this verse. That aspect of Brahm which is neutral and totally oblivious of this world and remains self-contented is known

as Shiva, while when it took up a dynamic form in order to initiate the process of creation it came to be known as Vishnu. Presently here, Shiva is regarded as the Viraat Purush, and Vishnu is regarded as Prakriti or Mother Nature. This is because the Viraat was the ‘cosmic Father’ who provided the sperm, the ‘vital spark of life’. The cosmic bowl where the creation was conceived was not a hollow devoid of the presence of the Viraat for the simple reason that whatever that existed was nothing but Brahm, and this Viraat Purush was Brahm’s gross macrocosmic body that was all-pervading and all-encompassing; nothing existed outside of it. Therefore, this so-called ‘cosmic womb’ was also the body of the Viraat Purush from which the sperm was produced. Hence, the Viraat acted as the cosmic Father as well as the cosmic Mother called Prakriti. Again, since Vishnu and Viraat Purush are the same entities, it follows that Vishnu and Prakriti are also the same.

Since the Mother is responsible for nourishing the offspring with her milk after it’s born and with her own fluids when it was still in its formative stage in her womb, Vishnu is called the Janaardana, the sustainer, nourisher and protector of creation, as opposed to Shiva. That is, Vishnu is a manifestation of Shiva for the purpose of sustenance and protection of creation.

²It has just been said in this verse that Rudra or Shiva is the cosmic Father of creation by providing the ‘seed’ or sperm of life. Since the function of creation is the duty of Brahma, it is now confirmed that Rudra is none else but Brahma, or Brahma is a manifestation of Rudra for the purpose of creation. An interesting thing is to be observed here—whereas traditionally Rudra is regarded as the God responsible for death, in this verse he is shown as being the cosmic father and creator. The ‘sperm’ inherently has the dynamism, the strength and the vital life-creating powers and energy required to initiate the process of creation, and since this is provided by Rudra it is obvious that he is the Father of the entire creation, including the Gods and Goddesses. That is why he is honoured with the title of ‘Maheshwar’, the great God—refer verse no. 9.

Now, ‘fire’ which stands for the eclectic virtues of light, heat, warmth, energy and vitality is the most important requirement for life in all its forms. Life, heat and warmth go hand in hand; one cannot separate the warmth and heat of fire from the earth and imagine it to be habitable by any stretch of imagination. This is proved by the fact that no life is sustainable in frigid conditions and sub-zero temperatures, while warm climate teems with life in all its colourful hues. Since Brahma has the mandate of creation, he is regarded as the personification of the Fire God. Or, by extension, Brahma and the Fire God are both manifestations of Rudra (Shiva) for the purpose of creation. In fact, the word ‘Rudra’ means the ferocious form of the otherwise calm, amiable and docile Shiva, and ‘fire’ is a metaphor for anger and ferocity, the qualities opposite of Shiva.

This verse, like many others in this magnificent Upanishad of Advaita Vedanta, is a remarkable exposition to prove the uniformity and non-duality of creation!]

“verse no. 8 = Lord Rudra (Shiva) is manifested as both Lords Brahma the creator and Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation. Besides this, the visible world overlooked by the Agni (the Fire God represented by the celestial sun) and the Som (the Moon God represented by the celestial moon) is also a manifestation of this same Rudra¹.

All the males of creation represent Rudra, while all the females symbolise Bhagwati (one of the many names of Uma or Parvati, the divine consort of Rudra or Shiva)² (8).

[Note—¹This is why Shiva is often referred to as ‘Maheshwar’, the Great God, essentially implying that he is senior to all the other Gods including the other two Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma and Vishnu. It is like the case of an equilateral triangle having all the three sides equal and therefore all the angles also of equal degree, but to be a

‘triangle’ it must have an apex corner or point and two base corners or points. This ‘apex’ point is personified by Shiva, while the other two base corners are represented by Brahma and Vishnu. Further, since the entire visible creation is not only created and pervaded by Brahm, the Supreme Being, but also is considered as his visible revelation, it obviously follows that whatever there is in this world is Brahm and by extension Rudra or Shiva. Therefore, the sun and the moon are also within this sphere of definition of Brahm.

²Rudra is one of the dynamic forms of Shiva. The latter represents the Viraat Purush who is the male aspect of creation. From the Viraat was created the female counterpart called the Shakti. As the process of creation progressed, the Viraat Purush came to be known as Vishnu and Shakti as Bhagwati. The word ‘Bhag’ refers to the female genital where the male sperm fuses with the female egg to form the embryo. Hence, the form of the Lord that acted as the cosmic womb where the cosmic egg was conceived and nourished till it emerged as the visible creation was called Bhagwati—i.e. one who is possessed of the Bhag, one who is the Lord of the female as its rightful husband and therefore has full right over the sexual process associated with her organs. In other words, the Supreme Being revealed in the form of the Trinity Gods is the unquestioned Lord of creation that has emerged from the cosmic womb represented by Mother Nature called Prakriti. Since Prakriti has the magnificent ability to bear such a vast creation in her bosom, she is also called Shakti, or the eclectic virtues of strength, energy and powers personified.

Earlier verse no. 7 has already stated that Rudra symbolises the cosmic sperm or ‘Beej’ representing the male aspect of creation while Vishnu stands for the cosmic womb or the female aspect of creation. It has been said elsewhere that at the time of creation, the Viraat Purush had assumed the form a man or male. Therefore, the Shakti aspect of creation revealed as the female. Hence, all males are manifestations of Rudra, and all females of Bhagwati. The basic idea in this verse is that one should not distinguish between any two humans as one being of a higher class and the other being of a lower class. The eclectic and well considered enlightened view is to treat all the creatures as one or the other forms of the same macrocosmic form of the supreme transcendental Lord who is the only truthful ‘One’ in creation and who is present in all the distinguishable forms in which we see this world at our microcosmic level. Refer notes to earlier verse nos. 3-8 also.]

“verse no. 9 = Similarly, the entire creation—both the animate as well as the inanimate—is nothing but Rudra and Uma personified, a visible form of the invisible Rudra and Uma¹.

The entire visible world symbolises Uma (the active principle of Rudra and dynamic aspect of Brahm that is known as Prakriti), while the entire invisible world stands for Maheshwar (literally the ‘great Lord’ referring to the Viraat Purush who is the invisible macrocosmic manifestation of Brahm and represents the gross body of the creation as a whole; the passive aspect of the supreme transcendental Brahm) (9).

[Note--¹This indicates that the entire creation having a male component and a female component represents the two divine aspects of Brahm known as Rudra and Uma which correspond to Brahm’s passive and active forms respectively.

The entire creation has come into being from the Viraat Purush. Had the Viraat Purush not undergone self-mutation to produce a male and a female and then cleaving to give them separate and independent existence, there would have been only one sex in creation, and we would not have separate male and female. Since the Viraat had metamorphosed himself as a male and a female in order to initiate and propagate creation in the very beginning of creation itself, we still have these two forms of creatures who continue with this basic function of creation even today. To ensure that his progeny did

not abstain from this task of procreation, the Lord was so clever that he made this exercise of having sex as the most attractive of all deeds in this creation. A person who can overcome this ‘natural instinct’ is therefore regarded as a personified Shiva because he would be like Brahm himself who did not indulge in any sexual activity when he decided to create. So, does this mean that a self-restrained ascetic has any less powers than the man who exhibits his prowess by creating a new life in the form of his off spring? Not at all for the simple reason that all Yoga Upanishads emphasise that a self-realised ascetic acquires a number of mystical powers called the ‘Siddhis’ which empower him with such great powers that even the Gods are no match for him.]

“verse nos. 10-11 = The cosmic union of Uma (Shakti representing the active and dynamic aspect of the supreme Brahm and transcendental Divinity) and Shankar (Rudra or Shiva representing the passive aspect of the supreme Brahm and Divinity) creates Vishnu (the Viraat Purush—the macrocosmic and invisible gross body of Brahm from which the rest of creation unfolded)¹.

Therefore, those who bow to Vishnu with great reverence and worship him with great devotion are deemed to be knowledgeable about the three aspects of the Atma (the divine entity known as the universal Soul and the quintessential Consciousness of creation)—viz. the Atma, the Parmatma and the Antaraatma². This wisdom, erudition and enlightenment helps them to know the eclectic quintessential Truth of creation and the fundamental Reality behind all that exists, which in turn provides them with an opportunity to become self-realised and Brahm-realised. In other words, they find shelter in the supreme Atma which is the Truth representing their own self and the rest of the creation³ (10-11).

[Note—¹When the passive aspect of Brahm known as Shankar or Rudra decided to initiate the process of creation, he activated his own creative dynamic energy that was hitherto in a latent and dormant format, thereby enabling himself to do so. This activated dynamism of Rudra came to be known as Uma. The resultant off spring was the Viraat Purush. Hence, the Viraat Purush is the result of the symbolic union of the male aspect of Brahm as Shiva or Shankar or Rudra, and the female aspect as Uma.

²The three aspects of the Atma, the pure consciousness, mentioned here are as follows—(1) The word *Atma* refers to the divine cosmic entity that is pure consciousness and without which no existence is possible. The Atma is universal, uniform, all-pervading, all-encompassing, the ultimate Truth and Reality of creation, most divine, magnificent and glorious, pure and uncorrupt cosmic Consciousness. It is the soul and essence of existence; it is the base upon which everything is founded. In fact, what is non-Atma is considered as non-truth in creation. This Atma is transcendental and beyond the purview of time, space and definition. The glorious and eclectic virtues and divine nature of this Atma is the subject matter of a number of Upanishads. (2) At the macrocosmic level, this Atma is known as the supreme Atma or *Parmatma*. This refers to the superior macrocosmic version of the Atma that was revealed when Brahm decided to initiate the process of creation and manifested his own self as the all pervading and all encompassing Viraat Purush, or as the different Gods of the Trinity such as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva or Rudra. This is the Parmatma or the supreme Atma or the supreme Lord at the macrocosmic level who is being referred to in this verse. (3) Finally, when the creation came into being, this supreme Consciousness represented by the Supreme Being known as Parmatma took up residence in the inner being of the individual creature as its Atma or soul. This aspect of the Atma was called *Antaraatma* as it resides in the inner self of the individual creature. This is the microcosmic aspect of the Atma known as the

Paramatma at the macrocosmic level, and as the Atma in its primary and fundamental level that transcends all these known forms of creation. The term 'Atma' in its principal and elementary form is the Consciousness in its purest and most sublime form.

Therefore there is no fundamental difference between these three forms of the Atma just like there is no difference between the basic nature and identity of an entity known as 'water' whether it is in a cup, in an ocean or as invisible moisture which is uniformly distributed in the atmosphere but not visible to the naked eye. The water in the cup is like the individual Atma of the creature that is limited by the space of the cup representing the body of the creature, the water of the ocean is like the macrocosmic counterpart of this individual Atma because of its vastness and infinite dimensions, and the water molecule of the water vapour or moisture is the Atma in its microscopic and atomic form as the basic element called Consciousness.

³This wisdom is called 'self awareness and enlightenment'. It is the awareness of the ultimate Truth and Reality of creation. Once a wise man comes to know this truth, he would abhor all delusions and falsehoods pertaining to the gross body and the material world as if they were the spiritual plague.]

“verse no. 15 = Dharma (the virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety) personifies Rudra. The Jagat (the world, both the animate and the inanimate) is a symbolic representation of Vishnu. And Gyan (knowledge, wisdom and erudition) stands for Brahma¹ (15).

[Note—¹Dharma is like *Rudra* because it is very strict and uncompromising in its discipline. If any violation is observed in the implementation of the virtues represented by Dharma, such as the good virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety, then it would immediately get angry and cast death and destruction upon the perpetrators of evil and misdeed. It is uncompromising in this aspect even as death symbolised by Shiva is unrelenting in its job. Here Dharma is a personified form of all the good virtues of Rudra.

The living world is like *Vishnu* because it throbs and pulsates with vibrant and colourful life. It sustains itself in a perpetual manner if it is auspicious and righteous. Noble virtues are always at a premium and given due respect even today in this world, indicating that Vishnu is hidden in this world imperceptibly because the world would not accept the unrighteous and corrupt, and it treats with disdain everything not auspicious and according to the righteous code of conduct and ethics. The visible creation is self-sustaining. Once having come into existence, it moves ahead on its own steam. The father takes care of his son when he is young, and the son takes of the father when the latter grows old and infirm. The world creates its own resources, makes discoveries and innovations as and when the need arises, it builds, destroys and re-builds again in an endless cycle of creation, sustenance and destruction. This ability of the world to sustain itself is a personified virtue of Vishnu whose mandate is to support the creation on a perpetual basis.

Finally, since *Brahma* had created the Vedas, the repositories of all available knowledge needed for mankind, he is regarded as a personification of Gyan meaning knowledge, erudition, sagacity, wisdom and awareness of the truth.]”

1.10 Kalagni-Rudra/Kalagnirudra—

The Kalagni-Rudra literally means Lord Shiva, the concluder, in his most ferocious form which is like the fire of dooms-day. Shiva is the greatest ascetic, a great renunciate, most

auspicious and regarded as an enlightened God. So his invocation helps the spiritual seeker to burn all his worldly delusions and taints arising out of ignorance and attachments to falsehoods. This paves the path for his ultimate liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Lord Shiva is the designated Authority that controls death and destruction, not only of the gross physical world and its visible objects but also metaphorically of all the evil tendencies, all the blemishes and faults that are characteristic of this deluding world and which usually cover the soul of the creature like a layer of thick scum floating on the surface of the otherwise crystal-clear waters of the mountain lake.

The Rudraksha beads (seeds of the tree *eleocarpus ganitrus*) with five faces or surfaces used in rosaries and necklaces are also called Kalagni-rudra beads because these are very much liked by Lord Shiva. The great spiritual importance and metaphysical significance of the Rudraksha beads have been explained in the *Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad* of the Sam Veda tradition, the *Kalagni Rudra Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and the *Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman 7, verse no. 8 of the Atharva Veda tradition.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition is essentially revealed by Lord Kalagnirudra when he was approached by sage Bhususnd who wished to know about the immense spiritual value and metaphysical significance of the sacred ash of the fire sacrifice, called the 'Bhasma', and the three lines marked on the body from its paste, called the 'Tripundra'—refer Brahman 1-6, *Brihajjabal Upanishad*.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman 2, verse no. 1 says that Kalagnirudra personifies the Fire element and the Soma element. The Fire represents dynamism, heat and energy, while Soma represents the soothing elixir that acts as a balm for the scorching heat of the fire. Thus, the Lord is severe and ruthless on the one hand, and soothing and calming on the other hand. The sacred ash that Lord Shiva smears over his body represents the calmed-down fire, i.e. though it has its origin in the hot fire it has become finally cool. This implies that though the Lord becomes angry at times when he watches the creation going out of hands and wayward to the extreme, needing to be wiped out so that the slate can be cleaned for a fresh start, he soon becomes absolutely calm and tranquil, re-submerging himself in deep meditation.

1.11 Non-duality or oneness between Shiva and the other great Gods of the Trinity—

It is well established that one of the names of Lord Shiva is 'Maha-deva', the 'Great God'. One is called 'great' only when he has certain virtues and qualifications that are extraordinary, magnificent and grand. The three Gods of the Trinity represent the three fundamental facets or phases or aspects of this creation—viz. creation, growth and development, and conclusion. They are represented by Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Rudra the concluder.

As we have already studied in the above pages, 'Rudra' is one function of Shiva, and it is to concluder. But Rudra is not the complete identity of Shiva, for Lord Shiva is genuinely and inherently calm and tranquil, being lost in meditation and contemplation, as opposed to the obvious angry and wrathful form of Rudra. After all, being the 'Great

God' who is a manifestation of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, one of his duties is to bring to an end whatever has come into being, because change is the fundamental law of Nature, and the old becomes stagnant, stale and staid at some point of time when it is no more possible for further development and growth, i.e. when the outer boundary of creation and renovation is reached, thereby creating a need for change, restructuring, rejuvenation and replacement. Then Shiva becomes 'Rudra'.

Being the 'Great God', he is also responsible for sustaining this creation, and this form of Shiva is known as 'Vishnu'. When the time comes to start a new phase of creation, Shiva becomes the creator 'Brahma'.

In his cosmic form, Shiva is Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, and in his microcosmic form he is the pure conscious Atma, the soul, the 'self' of all living beings. *Non-duality* or oneness or uniformity between Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma as Trinity Gods, Jiva and Brahm—The entire *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* and *Skanda Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda are dedicated to this theme.

Some of the concepts on non-duality as propounded in *Skanda Upanishad* are as follows—

(i) Non-duality or oneness or uniformity between Shiva and Vishnu = verse nos. 4, 8-9. [This fact has also been highlighted in the book 'Vinai Patrika' of saint Goswami Tulsidas, in its verse no. 49.]

(ii) Non-duality or oneness or uniformity between Shiva and Jiva or the living being = verse nos. 6, 9.

(iii) Non-duality or oneness or uniformity between Shiva, Brahm and Jiva = verse no. 9.

(iv) Non-duality or oneness or uniformity between the three Gods of the Trinity = verse no. 13.

(v) The relationship between *Shiva and Shakti* has been explained in *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 167.

(vi) The non-duality or oneness between *Shiva and Vishnu* has been explained in *Rudra Hridaya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda; the *Brihajjabal Upanishad*, Brahman 6, verse nos. 8-9, and the *Sharav Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda.

(vii) The non-duality or oneness between *Brahm and Shiva* has been expounded in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 32; *Dakshin Murti or Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad*. (ii) Atharva Veda's *Atharva-shir Upanishad*.

(viii) The question 'how *Shiva*, the personification of the eternal Truth of creation known as Brahm, *becomes a Jiva* or the living being' has been answered in *Skanda Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 7, 13.

(ix) Non-duality between *Brahm, Atma and Shiva*—*Rudra Upanishad*, verse no. 3, stanza no. 1-2.

(x) Non-duality between *Lord Narsingh/Narsingh and Shiva*—*Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 10, 12.

(xi) Non-duality between *Lord Ram, Narayan (Vishnu) and Shiva*—refer *Ram Rahasya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 3.

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Lord Shiva-Book 2

The Legend of Lord Shiva:

The Maha-Deva and The Great God

(Lord Shiva's Glories, Legends, Shiva-Puran & Upanishads)

CHAPTER 2

THE SHIVA PURAN

The Shiva Puran has twenty-four thousand Shlokas. These are divided into six samhitas or sections. The names of the sections are—(1) Gyan samhita, (2) Vidyeshvara samhita, (3) Kailas samhita, (4) Sanatkumar samhita, (5) Vayaviya samhita, and (6) Dharma samhita.

Each samhita is further subdivided into chapters (known as Adhyaya). Gyan samhita has seventy-eight chapters, Vidyeshvara samhita sixteen, Kailas samhita twelve, Sanathkumar samhita fifty-nine, Vayaviya samhita thirty, and Dharma samhita sixty-five.

The Shiva Puran was recited by Veda-Vyasa's disciple Romaharshan, who is also known as Lom-harshan.

2.1 The Genesis of Shiva Puran: the conversation between sage Romaharshan and other sages—

There were many sages who lived in a forest named Naimisharanya. One day, these sages accosted Romaharshan and said, Romaharshan, you are blessed. You have taught us a lot, but we are still not satisfied. You have had the fortune of studying under Veda-vyasa, and there is nothing that you do not know, about the past, the present or the future. So, please tell us about Shiva; we do not know very much about Lord Shiva.'

Romaharshan replied, 'I will relate to you that which you want to know. And I am not going to make anything up. Many years ago, the sage Narad had wanted to find out about Shiva from his father, Brahma. Whatever Brahma had instructed his son. I am going to relate to you:--

Brahma: At the beginning of creation, there was nothing in the universe. The universe was not there either. It was only the Brahm (the cosmic Consciousness) which was everywhere. The Brahm was neither hot nor cold, neither thick nor thin. It had no

beginning and no end. There was water everywhere. Lord Vishnu manifested himself in his great form and slept on the water. While Vishnu was sleeping, a lotus flower (Padma) sprouted from his navel. It had many petals and its stem shone like a thousand suns. From the cells of the lotus Brahma was born.

Brahma began to wonder—there seems to be nothing around except for this lotus. Who am I? Where did I come from? What am I supposed to do? Whose son am I? Who made me?

Brahma thought he might find the answers to these questions if he explored the lotus a bit. Perhaps he ought to try and find the centre of the lotus. Brahma descended down the stem of the lotus and wandered around for a hundred years. But he could not find the flower's centre. He then decided that he might as well go back to the cell from where he had been born. But despite wandering around the stem for another hundred years, Brahma could not find the cell. By then he was so tired that he gave up and rested.

Suddenly he heard the words—'Brahma, do Tapa (severe penance) in the form of deep meditation.'

Brahma meditated for twelve years. When the twelve years were over, the four-armed Vishnu appeared before Brahma. In the four hands Vishnu held a shankha (conch shell), a chakra (a bladed discus), a gada (mace) and a padma (lotus). Brahma didn't know who this person was and he asked, 'Who are you?'

Vishnu didn't directly answer the question. Instead, he replied, 'Son, the great Lord Vishnu has created you.' [That is, I am your father; can't you recognize even your own father?]

'Who are you to call me a son?'—demanded Brahma.

Vishnu replied, 'Can't you recognize me? I am Vishnu. It is from my body that you have been created.'

But Brahma was not convinced. He began to fight with Vishnu.

2.2 The Linga/Lingam—

While they were thus engaged in fighting, a shining Linga (Shiva's image) arrived on the scene. It seemed to have no beginning or end.

Vishnu said, 'Brahma, let us stop fighting. There is a third being here now. What on earth is this Linga? And where did it come from? Let us try and find out what this is. You adopt the form of a Swan (Hansa) and go up. I shall adopt the form of boar (Varaaha) and go down. Let us try and find the extremities of this Linga.'

Brahma agreed. He became a white swan and flew up. Vishnu became a white boar and went down. They looked for four thousand years, but could not find the end of the Linga. So they returned to where they had started off from and began to pray. They prayed for a hundred years. After the hundred years were over, the sound of OM was heard and a being with five faces and ten arms appeared before them. This was Mahadeva or Shiva.

Vishnu said, 'It is good that Brahma and I have been fighting. It is because of our fight that you arrived.'

Shiva replied, 'We are all three parts of the same entity and have been divided into three. Brahma is the creator. Vishnu is the preserver and I am the destroyer. There is

another being named Rudra who will be born from my body, but Rudra and I are really one and the same. Let Brahma create now.'

Shiva disappeared, and Brahma and Vishnu gave up their forms of a swan and a boar.

A Linga or Lingam is an image or icon of Shiva. There are several Lingas. Wherever Shiva's devotees assemble to worship the Lord, he reveals himself there in the form of a Linga. However, there are twelve important Lingas, and these are known as Jyotirlingas—the self-illuminated and radiant visible forms of Shiva who is the Supreme Being invisible to the naked eyes. These twelve divine Lingas are the following—Somanath, Mallikarjun, Mahakal, Omkar, Kedar, Bhima-shankar, Vishvanath, Trymbak, Vaidyanath, Nagesh, Rameshvar and Ghushnesh.

2.3 Creation—

There was water everywhere. In the water, Vishnu created a huge egg (anda). He then himself entered the egg in his huge form. Meanwhile, Brahma started to pray. From the powers of his meditation he created several sages (known as Rishis). Kardama, Daksha and Marichi were among them. Marichi's son was Kashyapa. Daksha had sixty daughters and thirteen of them were married to Kashyapa. The children of Kashyapa and these daughters became Adityas (Gods), daityas (demons) and Danavas (demons), as well as the trees, birds, snakes, mountains and creepers. Thus was the world populated.

A divine Being named Rudra, who was none other than Shiva himself, was also born from Brahma. Rudra lived on Mount Kailas. Daksha's daughter Sati was married to Rudra. But Daksha and Rudra did not like each other. Daksha arranged a yajna (sacrifice) and he did not invite Rudra to attend this sacrifice. Although Sati was not invited either, she went to attend the ceremony. But Daksha insulted her so much that Sati gave up her life in protest. This so angered Rudra that he sent his companions to destroy the sacrifice, disrupt the ceremony, and kill all the Gods who had gone to attend it. This was done.

But Rudra was subsequently pacified and brought the dead Gods back to life. The sacrifice was completed. Sati herself was reborn as the daughter of the mountain Himalaya and his wife Menaka. She was known as Parvati and she was again married to Rudra or Shiva.

2.4 The demon Tarakasura—

There was an Asura (demon) named Tara. Tara's son was Taraka. Taraka wished to defeat the Gods. He therefore went to a place named Madhuvana and began to perform very difficult Tapa. He gazed at the sun and stood there with his arms raised. He stood on one leg and that too, only on the toes of his feet. A hundred years passed. For those hundred years, Taraka drank only water and had no food to eat.

For the next hundreds, he gave up that also and lived only on air. A hundred years were spent in performing Tapa inside water, another hundred years on earth and a hundred years more inside fire. For a hundred years he performed Tapa (severe austerity and penance) by standing upside down on his hands. And for yet another hundred years,

he hung upside down from the branches of a tree. The meditation was so intense and formidable, done with great devotion and steadfastness that it extremely pleased Brahma. So he appeared before Tarakasura and said, 'I am pleased with your Tapa. What boon do you want?'

Tarakasura replied, 'If you are so pleased with my Tapa, then grant me two boons. The first boon should be that no one created by you should be as strong as me. The second boon should be that I should be killed only by Shiva's son.'

Shiva at that point of time had no sons. Sati had died, and although she had been reborn as Parvati, she had not been married to Shiva yet.

Brahma granted Tarakasura the two boons. The demon went to a city named Shonitapur and began to live there. All the other demons made Tarakasura their king. Thanks to the boon. Tarakasura was so strong that he easily defeated the Gods. He conquered the three worlds and drove the Gods out of heaven. He stole all their belongings and employed the Gods as his servants.

The desperate and despondent Gods went to Brahma and asked him to find a solution to the terror of Tarakasura and the problem this demon had created for the entire creation.

Brahma expressed his helplessness and said, 'I can't. It is because of my boon that the demon has become so powerful. Besides, my boon says that Tarakasura can only be killed by Shiva's son. Shiva has got to have a son. He is now performing Tapa in the Himalaya Mountains. Parvati is also in that region. So you must do something so that these two fall in love with each other and marry to beget a son.'

2.5 The Burning of the God of Love & Passion, known as Kamdeo—

The Gods decided to follow Brahma's advice. But how could it be ensured that Shiva and Parvati fell in love with each other? The king of the Gods was Indra and the God of love was Kandarpa or Madana.

Indra summoned Kandarpa, and requested him, 'You have to help us. There is no other way out. Shiva is performing Tapa in the Himalayas. Parvati is also in the region. Make sure that the two fall in love. That is what I request you to do to help the Gods.'

Kandarpa went to the place where Shiva was meditating. And as soon as the God of love appeared, the place took on the traits of a spring which was perennial. Flowers bloomed and bees buzzed among the flowers. Cuckoos sang and fragrant breezes started to waft through the forest. Shiva tried to concentrate on his meditation. But he kept getting distracted.

While all this was going on, who should arrive there but Parvati? She was so beautiful that Shiva was smitten with love for her. Parvati also seemed to like Shiva. But life is never simple. Shiva was, after all, Shiva. He realized that something was wrong. How could his meditation have been disturbed? How was it that the season seemed to be spring although it had no business to be spring? When Shiva glanced around, his eyes fell on Kandarpa who was hiding. He realized that it was Kandarpa who was responsible for all this mischief.

Shiva was angered. He had a third eye in the middle of his forehead. From this third eye flames sprouted and these flames burnt Kandarpa to ashes.

Kandarpa's wife was Rati. When Rati saw that her husband had been burnt to ashes, her grief knew no bounds. At first she lost consciousness. When she recovered, she lamented and grieved woefully, 'Now, what is going to happen to me? My husband, my love, where have you gone?'

The Gods and Rati sought out Shiva. They explained that it had been no fault of Kandarpa's. He had been asked to disturb Shiva's Tapa because of the Tarakasura problem. What would happen to Rati now?

Shiva replied, 'What has happened has happened. Nothing can be done about Kandarpa now. He will eventually be born in the city of Dvaraka as Krishna's son Pradyumna. Rati will then be re-untied with Kandarpa. But till that time, let her simply wait.'

The Gods dispersed, still desperate, anxious and despondent. The matter of Shiva and Parvati's marriage had not progressed at all.

[Note—This story is also narrated in the epic "Ram Charit Manas" of Goswami Tulsidas, in its Baal Kand (Canto 1), from Chaupai (verse) line no. 5 that precedes Doha (2-line verse) no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.]

2.6 Parvati's Tapa—

But Parvati had fallen in love with Shiva and she didn't know what she could do about it. She thought of Shiva all the time.

One day the sage Narad came and told her, 'Shiva is only pleased with Tapa. Without Tapa, even Brahma and the other Gods do not get to see Shiva. So, why don't you perform a Tapa?'

On the advice of Narad, Parvati decided to do what she was told, i.e. to do Tapa in order to have Lord Shiva as her husband. She asked her parents for permission. Her father agreed with alacrity. Although her mother Menaka was not at all keen that Parvati should perform difficult Tapa, she too eventually agreed. Parvati gave up her beautiful jewellery and attractive clothes in order to lead a life of extreme austerity while she performed the penance to find access to Shiva. She wore only a deer-skin instead.

There is a peak in the Himalayas known as Gouriskikhara. It is there that Parvati went for her Tapa. The meditation was very arduous and required a strong will to do it. During the monsoon Parvati meditated while seated on the ground. In the winter she meditated under the water. Wild beasts of the formidable forest dared not harm her. All the Gods and sages assembled to see this wonderful Tapa.

The Gods and the sages also began to pray to Shiva—'Lord, can't you see that Parvati is performing difficult Tapa? No one has meditated like this before, and no one will meditate like this in the future. Please grant her what she wants.'

Shiva adopted the form of an old Brahmin (the first of the four classes) and appeared at Parvati's hermitage. Parvati welcomed the old man and worshipped him with flowers and fruits.

The Brahmin enquired, 'Why are you meditating so sternly? What is it that you want?'

Parvati replied, 'I wish to have Shiva as my husband.'

The Brahmin tried to dissuade her and test her sincerity and devotion for Lord Shiva by virtually rebuking her—‘You are indeed stupid. What you are doing is like giving up gold for a piece of glass, or giving sandalwood for mud. Does anyone give up the water of the Ganga and drink water from a well instead? Marry one of the Gods instead, go and marry Indra. Shiva is an abominable fellow, not fit to be your husband. He has three eyes and five faces. His hair is matted and his body is smeared with ashes. He wears snakes as garlands. He is always accompanied by ghosts. He has no clothes and no wealth. No one knows who his parents are. He lives in the forest and his throat is blue with poison. I think you are making a big mistake. Forget about Shiva, and don’t waste your life.’

The Brahmin’s words angered Parvati. She retorted indignantly and vehemently—‘It is you who are stupid. You don’t know a thing about Shiva. He is the lord of everything. You have insulted Shiva and cursed me that I made the mistake of worshipping you. You are again going to say something nasty about Shiva. But before you can do that, let me go away. I shall not stay to hear Shiva being insulted right before me in the way you are causing insinuation to my beloved and adored Lord.’

As Parvati was about to depart, Shiva adopted his own original form and said, ‘Where are you going my dear? I thought that you were praying for me. You can’t forsake me now. I am not going to let you go. Ask for a boon.’

Parvati replied, ‘Please marry me according to the prescribed rites if you are indeed pleased with me and satisfied about my devotion and loyalty towards yourself.’

Shiva willingly agreed, and then Parvati returned home, successful in her objective.

[Note—This story is also narrated in the epic “Ram Charit Manas” of Goswami Tulsidas, in its Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 71—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82.]

2.7 The Marriage of Shiva and Parvati—

[There is a beautiful book titled ‘Parvati Mangal’ written by the famous poet-saint of 15-16th century India which magnificently describes the marriage of the divine couple in verses of extreme beauty. This whole book is quoted in Section 6 of our present compendium.]

Shiva called the seven great sages (saptarshis) and asked them to go to Himalaya as his messengers. The message was that he wished to marry Himalaya’s daughter Parvati. Himalaya was delighted to see the sages and even more delighted to learn that Shiva wanted to marry Parvati. A date was fixed for the marriage.

The day of the marriage finally dawned. The Gandharvas (singers of heaven) sang and the Apsaras (dancers of heaven) danced. All the Gods came to Kailas to accompany Shiva in the marriage procession. Meanwhile, Himalaya had also got ready. He had built many gates in front of his house and had placed flags on them. The beauty of Himalaya’s residence at that time is impossible to describe.

When the marriage procession arrived at the residence of Parvati, her mother Menaka rushed out to see the groom, exclaiming excitedly—‘Let me see Shiva; let me

see my son-in-law. My daughter Parvati has performed Tapa to obtain Shiva as a husband. He must be exceedingly handsome.'

The first person Menaka saw was Vishvavasu, the king of the Gandharvas. Vishvavasu was very handsome and, at first, Menaka thought that this was Shiva. But when she was told that this was only a singer who entertained Shiva, she thought that Shiva would be more handsome. Then her eyes fell down on the handsome Kuber, the God of wealth, and she thought that this had to be Shiva. Kuber was more attractive than Vishvavasu. But Menaka was told that this was not Shiva either. Then came Varun, more attractive than Kuber. But this was not Menaka's son-in-law. Nor was her son-in-law the great God Yam, handsomer than Varun. The handsome Gods Indra, Surya and Chandra passed by. But Narad told Menaka that these were not Shiva, they were simply Shiva's servants.

Menaka's joy knew no bounds. If these were the servants, she thought, what was the master going to be like? She mistook Brahma, Vishnu and Brihaspati for Shiva, and each time Narad that she was wrong. Where then was Shiva? Finally Shiva came and Narad pointed him out to Menaka. At the sight of her son-in-law, Menaka fell unconscious due to shock and dismay.

Shiva was surrounded by ghosts on all sides. The faces were fierce, their complexions were dark and they made a tremendous racket. Shiva himself rode on bull. He had three eyes, five faces and ten arms. He was smeared with ashes and the moon adorned his forehead. He was dressed in a tiger's skin and a garland of skulls hung around his neck. No wonder Menaka fainted!

When she recovered from the initial shock, she began to lament. She scolded Himalaya, Narad and Parvati for her misfortune. Brahma, the other Gods, and the sages tried to pacify Menaka. But to no avail.

'I will not permit my daughter to be married to Shiva,' Menaka said resolutely. 'I will give her poison instead. I will throw her into a well and kill her. I will chop her up into pieces with a weapon. I will hurl her into the sea. I will kill myself. I will get Parvati married to someone else, but certainly not to Shiva.'

Parvati made a firm resolve then, declaring her intentions in no uncertain terms—'I shall not marry anyone other than Shiva. Is a jackal a fit replacement for a lion?'

Vishnu then tried to pacify Menaka. But this did not succeed either. Finally, Narad asked Shiva to display his beautiful form and Shiva obliged. This form is exhibited only to those who are very faithful to Shiva. Everyone was charmed by this beautiful form, even Menaka. His body shone like a thousand suns and a crown sparkled on his head. His clothes glittered and the lustre of his jewels put the stars to shame.

Menaka begged forgiveness for her foolishness and now there were no further obstacles to the marriage. Under Brahma's supervision, the marriage ceremony took place and Shiva and Parvati returned to Kailash.

[Note—This story is also narrated in the epic "Ram Charit Manas" of Goswami Tulsidas, in its Baal Kand, from Chaupai (verse) line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 88—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 103.]

2.8 Kartikeya, the son of Shiva—

Shiva and Parvati's son was Skanada or Kartikeya. When the baby was very small, it got lost in some reeds. Six princesses discovered the baby in the reeds and each wanted to bring up the baby as her own son. All of them finally cooperated in bringing up the body. These princesses were the Kritikas and the boy came to be known as Kartikeya. The Gods got to know from Narad that Kartikeya had been brought up by the Kritikas. They came and appointed Kartikeya their general. The army of Gods then invaded Tarakasura's city Shonitapura. A terrible fight raged for ten days. The Gods completely decimated the demons and Kartikeya killed Tarakasura.

After the victory celebrations were over, Kartikeya was restored to his parents. Tripura Tarakasura had three sons named Vidyumali, Tarakaksha and Viryavana. These three began to perform Tapa. For a hundred years they meditated standing only on one leg. For a thousand more years they lived on air and meditated. They stood on their heads and meditated in this posture for yet another thousand years.

Brahma was pleased at this difficult Tapa. He appeared before them and said, 'What boon do you want granted?'

Tarakasura's sons replied, 'Make us immortal'.

Brahma said, 'I can't make you immortal; I don't have the power to do so (because all those born must die one or the other day, for this is the law of Nature and creation; I can't violate it myself). Ask for something else instead.'

'Very well then', said Vidyumali, Tarakaksha and Viryavana, 'grant us the following. Let three forts be made. The first will be of gold, the second of silver and the third of iron. We will live in these forts for a thousand years. At the end of the thousand years, the forts will become one. This combined fort will be called Tripura. And if anyone can then destroy this formidable fort of Tripura with only a single arrow, that shall be the death destined for us.'

Brahma was flabbergasted, but as he was constrained to grant some boon as promised, he most reluctantly had to accede to this absurd demand, and granted it (because he did not wish that these demons demand something more ridiculous and stunning).

There was a demon named Maya who was very good in the job of construction. So Brahma asked him to build the forts. The golden fort was built in heaven, the silver one in the sky and the iron one on earth. Tarakaksha got the golden fort, Viryavana the silver one and Vidyumali the iron one.

Each of the forts was as big as a city and had many palaces and Vimanas (space-vehicles) inside. The demons populated the three forts and began to flourish. The Gods did not like this at all. They first went to Brahma, but Brahma said he could not help them. After all, the demons had got Tripura thanks to his boon. The Gods then went to Shiva for help. But Shiva said that the demons were doing nothing wrong. As long as that was the case, he did not see why the Gods were so bothered. The Gods then went to Vishnu.

Vishnu's suggestion was as follows:--If the problem was that the demons were doing nothing wrong, the solution was to persuade them to become sinners first so that it will become an excuse to get rid of them.

To give effect to this planning, Lord Vishnu created a 'man' using his supreme power of creation. [Remember: The creator Brahma himself was created by Vishnu.

Vishnu is a personified form of the Viraat Purush, the cosmic Brahm and the Supreme Being.]

This man's head was shaven, his clothes were faded and he carried a wooden water-pot in his hands. He covered his mouth with a piece of cloth and approached Vishnu. The man asked Vishnu, 'What are my orders?'

Vishnu replied, 'Let me explain to you why you have been created. I will teach you a religion that is completely against the Vedas. You will then get the impression that there is no Swarga (heaven) and no Narka (hell), and that both heaven and hell are on earth. You will not believe that rewards and punishments for deeds committed on earth are meted out after death. Go to Tripura and teach the demons this religion, which they are dislodged from the righteous path. Then we will do something about Tripura.'

The newly created 'being' (the man-figure) did as he had been asked to do. He and four of his disciples went to a forest that was near Tripura and began to preach. They were trained by Vishnu himself. Therefore, their teachings were convincing and they had many converts. Even the sage Narad got confused and was converted. In fact, it was Narad who carried news of this wonderful new religion to king Vidyunmati.

'Oh King', he said, 'there is a wonderful new teacher with a wonderful new religion. I have never heard before. I have got converted myself.'

Since the great sage Narad had got converted, king Vidyunmati also accepted the new religion. And in due course, so did Tarakaksha and Viryavana. The demons gave up revering the Vedas, they stopped worshipping Shiva's Linga.

Vishnu and the other Gods then went to Shiva and began to pray to him. When Shiva appeared, they told him that the demons had now become evil and should be destroyed. They had even stopped worshipping Shiva's Linga.

Shiva agreed to destroy Tripura. Vishvakarma was the architect of the Gods. Shiva called Vishvakarma and asked him to make a suitable chariot, bow and arrow. The chariot was made entirely out of gold. Brahma himself became the charioteer and the chariot was speedily driven towards Tripura. The Gods accompanied Shiva with diverse weapons. By then a thousand years had passed so that the three forts had become a single Tripura.

Shiva instilled a divine weapon known as Pashupata into his arrow and shot it at Tripura. The arrow burnt up Tripura into ashes in a split second. While the celebrations were going on, the shaven-headed religious teachers arrived.

'What are we supposed to do now', they asked.

Brahma and Vishnu told them to go and live in the desert. The last of the four eras is Kaliyuga, and in that era evil would reign supreme. When Kaliyuga arrived, they were to come back and begin their teaching afresh.

2.9 Sita and the Ketaki Flower—

Sage Romaharshan told the assembled sages—'It is easy to please Shiva. But Shiva must never be worshipped with a Ketaki (flower of the plant *pandarnus odoratissimus*) or a Champaka flower (*michelia champaca* which bears yellow coloured fragrant flowers).'

'Why, what is wrong with these flowers', asked the sages.

'Let me tell you about the Ketaki flower first', replied Romaharshan.

Lord Ram's father Dasharath asked Ram to spend fourteen years in the forest. So Lord Ram went to the forest with his brother Lakshman and his wife Sita. The three of them started to live on the banks of the river Falgu. News reached the forest that Dasharatha had died in their absence and a Shraddha (funeral) ceremony had to be performed for the dead king. Lord Ram sent Lakshman to a nearby village to get the necessary ingredients. Time passed and Lakshman did not return. Lord Ram then went to get the ingredients himself and look for Lakshman. But Lord Ram too did not return. It was almost noon and the ceremony had to be performed before noon. In desperation, Sita decided to perform the ceremony herself. She went and bathed in the Falgu river and lit an earthen lamp. She then made the offerings (known as 'Pinda') to the dead ancestors herself.

Immediately, a voice was heard. 'Sita, you are blessed', it said. 'We are satisfied.' In utter amazement Sita watched some disembodied hands appear in the air to accept the offerings.

Sita asked, 'Who are you?'

The invisible voice replied, 'I am your dead father-in-law Dasharath. The funeral ceremony has been successful. I have accepted your offerings.'

Sita had her doubts, so she asked the invisible Spirit, 'But will Lord Ram and Lakshman believe me when I tell them that I have completed the offerings and they have been successfully accepted by the Spirit of our dead ancestor. They will never believe that such disembodied hands appeared out of thin air to accept the offerings.'

The invisible voice answered, 'They have to. You have four witnesses. The first is the river Falgu, the second is the cow over there, the third will be the fire of the sacrifice, and the last one will be the bush of the Ketaki plant.'

When Lord Ram and Lakshman returned, they asked Sita to quickly cook and prepare the food, for there was very little time left for the ceremony. It had to be completed ceremony before noon.

Sita then told them what had happened, and naturally, the two brothers did not believe her. They made fun of her and suggested that she was lying. Sita called upon her four witnesses, but each denied that it had seen anything. Without arguing any further, Sita cooked the food and Lord Ram made offerings to his ancestors.

A voice was then heard from the sky, 'Why are you calling us again? Sita has already satisfied us.'

Lord Ram was incredulous, and he said, 'I refuse to believe that.'

The disembodied voice retorted, 'Indeed it is true. Ask the Sun God.'

The Sun God confirmed that everything had happened just as Sita had said it had. Lord Ram and Lakshman were ashamed that they had doubted Sita's truthfulness, and were also impressed with the power of her virtue. But Sita cursed the four false witnesses. She cursed the Falgu river that it would henceforth only flow underground. She cursed the Ketaki flower that it would never be accepted by Shiva as an offering. She cursed the cow that its mouth would henceforth become impure. It had, after all, lied with its mouth. The hind sections of the cow would however continue to be pure. And finally Sita cursed the fire that it would consume everything indiscriminately so much so all the impurities of this world would be thrown into it to burn, and the creature would fear the fire and avoid it like a personified form of death and destruction.

That is the reason why a Ketaki flower must never be used to worship Shiva.

2.10 Sage Narad and the Champaka Tree—

Similarly, a Champaka flower should also not be used to worship Lord Shiva. The legend goes as follows:--

In the land of Gokarna there was a temple dedicated to Shiva. Narad decided that he would go and visit the temple. On the way, he saw a flowering Champaka tree and stopped to admire it. A Brahmin came there to pluck flowers from the tree. But seeing that Narad was there, the Brahmin refrained from plucking any flowers.

Narad asked him, 'Where are you going?'

The Brahmin lied and replied, 'To beg for some alms.'

Narad went to the temple. Meanwhile, the Brahmin plucked flowers from the Champaka tree and placed them in a basket that he covered up well to hide the flowers. But unfortunately, Narad met the Brahmin again on his way back from the temple. He asked the Brahmin, 'Where are you going now?'

The Brahmin lied once again, 'Home. I could not get any alms today.'

Narad became suspicious. He went to the Champaka tree and asked, 'Has that Brahmin plucked any flowers?'

The Tree too lied, saying 'What Brahmin? I don't know of any Brahmin. No one has plucked any flowers.'

Narad went back to the temple and discovered fresh Champaka flowers lying there on top of the Shiva Linga. There was another devotee praying there. Narad asked him, 'Do you know who came to worship with these Champaka flowers?'

The devotee replied honestly, 'Yes, I do. He is an evil Brahmin. He worships Shiva every day with the Champaka flowers. Thanks to Shiva's blessings, he has acquired some mystical powers whereby he has managed to completely brainwash the king, and has been secretly stealing the king's wealth. He also oppresses other Brahmins.'

Narad asked Shiva, 'Why do you encourage such an evil man?'

Shiva replied, 'I am helpless, for I cannot resist if someone worships me with the Champaka flowers.'

Just then, a Brahmin woman came running with her tale of woes. Her husband was crippled, but they had managed to get some money from the king so that their daughter could be married. They had also received a cow from the king. But the evil Brahmin was claiming that half of whatever they had received was his. It was due to his good offices that the king had been so generous, he was saying. The evil Brahmin had already appropriated half of the money. But how was a cow to be divided?'

Narad was stunned, and he then decided that something needed to be done about the Champaka tree and the evil Brahmin. Apart from everything else, the Champaka tree was a liar. Narad cursed the Champaka tree that its flowers would never be accepted by Shiva as an offering any longer from that instant. He also cursed the evil Brahmin that he would be born as a Raksha (demon) named Viraadha. But the Brahmin had been a devotee of Shiva. So the curse was qualified by the stipulation that Viraadha would be killed by Lord Ram and would then again become a Brahmin.

2.11 Lord Ganesh—

The door to Parvati's place was guarded by two of Shiva's companions, Nandi and Bhringi. But Parvati's companions, Jaya and Vijaya, didn't like this at all. They thought that there should be a guard who would be answerable to Parvati rather than to Shiva. It was Parvati's place, not Shiva's. Moreover, Shiva was in the habit of walking in at awkward moments, and Nandi and Bhiringi never stopped Shiva. Jaya and Vijaya asked Parvati to do something about this.

Parvati took some clay of a pond and fashioned the clay into a very handsome son. She dressed the son in beautiful clothes and jewellery. He was named Ganesh. Parvati told Ganesh, You are my son. Stand at the gate and do not allow anyone to enter. Ganesh picked up a rod and began his duty as sentry. Parvati went to have a bath.

Soon Shiva turned up with his companions. Ganesh objected—'Where are you going? You cannot pass this way. My mother is having her bath.'

Shiva replied, 'I am Shiva.'

Unfazed, Ganesh asked, 'Who is Shiva? I don't know of anybody known as Shiva. You cannot go in.'

Shiva tried to ignore Ganesh and enter, but Ganesh started to beat Shiva with the rod. Shiva then asked his companions to remove this child from the way, but to their dismay they got thrashed by Ganesh in the process. In the melee, Nandi tried to grasp one of Ganesh's legs, and Bhiringi the other leg. But Ganesh uprooted a wooden door and beat them so hard that they fled. The Gods and the sages all came to see what the uproar was about.

Shiva told Brahma, the eldest of the Gods, 'Why don't you try to pacify that creature?'

Brahma tried to reason with Ganesh, but Ganesh didn't know Brahma either, and paid no heed to his pleadings. He thought that this was another one of Shiva's companions. He therefore grabbed Brahma and tore off Brahma's beard by the fistful. Flabbergasted and stunned, the old Brahma fled from there writhing in pain.

Stakes were high, and mother Parvati felt her pride was at stake. So she kept supplying Ganesh with weapons and mystical powers to defeat and stand against the combined might of all the Gods. The Gods attacked Ganesh with all sorts of weapons, but he repulsed all of them.

Vishnu told Shiva, 'This fellow can only be killed with some trickery. Otherwise, he seems to be invincible.'

Hearing this, Ganesh flung a mace at Vishnu and hurt him seriously. He then struck down Shiva's bow with another mace. Vishnu and Ganesh then began to fight, with the Sudarshana Chakra (discus, the trademark weapon of Vishnu) being used by Vishnu, and maces by Ganesh. While this duel raged, Shiva crept up stealthily from behind and cut off Ganesh's head with his Trishula (trident). This was the trickery that Vishnu had planned to overcome the formidable might of Lord Ganesh.

When Parvati learnt of Ganesh's death, her ire was roused and she was inconsolable. She got ready to destroy the universe and everyone else inhabiting it. This caused immense alarm. The Gods sent sage Narad as an emissary to Parvati to try to pacify and console her. But Parvati agreed to relent only if two conditions were met—one

was that Ganesh be brought back to life, and the other was that Ganesh should be accepted as a 'God' with all the divine rights enjoyed by them.

These conditions were readily accepted. Ganesh's headless body was cleaned and Bathed, but the head could not be found. It had been lost in the heat of the battle. Shiva sent his companions out with the instructions to bring back the head of the first living being that they saw. This happened to be an elephant with one tusk. The elephant's head was stuck onto Ganesh's body, and Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva combined their powers to inject life to the dead body of Ganesh.

Shiva accepted Ganesh as his son. He also made Ganesh the lord of all his attendants known as the Ganas (companions). That is why the elephant-god is called Ganapati—the lord of Ganas. It was also decreed that worship to any God would be useless unless it was preceded by prayers to Ganesh, thereby elevating Ganesh to the stature of a senior-most God, the virtual 'king' of Gods.

Ganesh Chaturthi is a Tithi (date) falling on the 4th day of the lunar cycle. The Krishnapaksha is that part of the lunar fortnight during which the moon wanes. Since Parvati created Ganesh in the month of Kartika, and on the day known as Chaturthi Tithi of the dark fortnight of the moon (the Krishnapaksha), it is on this day therefore that Lord Ganapati is offered special worship.

2.12 The quarrel between Ganesh and Kartikeya—

Shiva and Parvati had two sons, Ganesh and Kartikeya. Both sons wanted to get married. Shiva and Parvati found it difficult to decide who should be married first. If they decided in the favour of one of them, the other one was bound to feel hurt. Both the sons were equally dear to them. So they decided to carry out a test. They called Ganesh and Kartikeya to them and said, 'We have devised a competition. Both of you have to travel around the world and return here. Whoever returns first will be married first. That should be fair and just to both of you.'

As soon as this condition was announced by Shiva and Parvati, Kartikeya dashed out on his journey, intent on defeating his rival Ganesh. But Ganesh had a heavy body (like that of a baby elephant), and so he wondered if he will ever complete the circuit in the first place. Therefore, being doubtful, he tarried and pondered on what ought to be done. He realized that this was a task that was virtually impossible for him to accomplish. He found it difficult enough to travel a couple of miles, and the circuit was as long as the full circumference of the world.

Being a wise fellow, he found a practical solution. First he bathed, and then he made Shiva and Parvati sit on two seats. He worshipped them and circled them seven times. After he finished circling them, Ganesh said triumphantly, 'Now please make arrangements for my wedding.'

Expressing incredulity at this confident assertion of Ganesh, Shiva and Parvati exclaimed—'What do you mean? Didn't you hear what we had said? We asked the two of you to travel around the world and come back. You better hurry. Kartikeya has already left. If you don't take care, he will beat you to it.'

Unworried and unfazed, Ganesh replied with a smile, 'But I have already been round the world seven times. Have not I circled the two of you seven times? The Vedas

say that circling one's parents is the same thing as circling the world. If you do not wish to argue that the Vedas are wrong, then you have to agree that I have circled the world seven times.'

Shiva and Parvati were left speechless as they could not well argue that the Vedas were wrong. They therefore they had to accept Ganesh's logic. Arrangements were made for his wedding.

Meanwhile, Vishvarua, the son of Kashyap, had two daughters named Siddhi and Buddhi. These two were married to Ganesh with a lot of fanfare. Ganesh had a son named Laksha from his first wife Siddhi, and a son named Labha from his second wife Buddhi.

Meanwhile, Kartikeya returned to Kailash after traveling around the world, and to his utter dismay discovered that Ganesh was already married, and was already the proud father of two children. He heard the entire story from Narad and felt that he had been cheated. He decided that he would no longer live with his parents. He also decided that he would never marry. That is the reason why Kartikeya is called 'Kumar', someone who is un-married.

Kartikeya began to live on Mount Krouncha. Shiva goes to visit him there on the day of the new-moon (Amavasya day), and Parvati goes to visit him on the day of the full-moon (Purnima day).

2.13 Nandikeshvar Tirtha—

A 'Tirtha' is a place of pilgrimage; 'Nandi' is Shiva's mount, the bull; and 'Ishwar' means the Lord. Hence, at this pilgrim site the Lingam of Shiva is worshipped as the Lord of the Nandi—the 'Nandishwar'.

In a city named Karnaki there used to live a Brahmin. He left his two sons with his wife and went to visit the city of Varanasi. It was then learnt that the Brahmin had died in Varanasi. His widow brought up her sons and eventually married them off. She became old and it was time for her to die. But death would not come. It seemed to the sons that their mother was hankering after something and would not die until her wish had been fulfilled.

They asked, 'Mother, what is it that you want?'

She replied, 'I have always wanted to visit the pilgrim place known as Varanasi, but now I am going to die without ever visiting the place. Promise me that when I am dead, you will take my ashes to Varanasi and throw them into the holy river Ganges there.'

The sons promised, saying 'We will. Now you can die in peace.'

The mother died and the sons performed her last rites. Then the eldest son, Suvadi, set out for Varanasi with his mother's ashes. The way was long and he stopped to rest and spend the night in a Brahmin's house. A cow was tied in front of the house and it was time for milking. Suvadi saw that when the Brahmin tried to milk the cow, the calf would not permit the milking and kicked the Brahmin. The Brahmin then hit the calf with a stick. The Brahmin went away after the milking. But Suvadi was still there and he heard the cow tell her calf, I am distressed that the Brahmin struck you. Tomorrow I am going to gore the Brahmin's son to death.

Next day, the Brahmin's son came to do the milking. The cow gored him with horns so that he died. But this meant that the cow had committed the sin of killing a Brahmin.

Because of the sin, the white cow turned completely black immediately. The cow left the house. Suvadi followed, amazed at this strange sight. The cow went to the banks of the river Narmada, to the place named Nandikeshvar. She bathed in the river and became white once again. This meant that the sin of killing a Brahmin had been completely washed away. Suvadi marveled at this and realized what a powerful Tirtha Nandikeshvar was.

He was about to leave for Varanasi after bathing in the river when he was accosted by a beautiful woman.

The woman asked, 'Where are you going Suvadi? Throw your mother's ashes in the river here. This is a far more important Tirtha than Varanasi.'

Suvadi enquired, 'Who are you?'

'I am a personified form of the holy river Ganges,' came the reply from the mysterious woman.

Then the woman vanished from sight, and Suvadi did as he had been advised. As soon as he had done this, his dead mother appeared in the sky and told him that she was immensely gratified. She would now go straight to heaven.

Nandikeshvar is a wonderful Tirtha because a Brahmin woman named Rishika had earlier performed very difficult Tapa there to please Shiva.

2.14 Atrishvara Tirtha—

There was a forest named Kaamad. It did not rain there for a hundred years. The leaves dried up and the dwellers of the forest started to suffer. Sage Atri lived there. So he once decided that he would meditate to try and bring the rains to the dried-up forest. Atri's wife was Anusuiya, and she thought that she might as well perform Tapa together with her husband. Both of them started to pray to Shiva and it was very difficult to decide whose Tapa was the more difficult. Fifty-four passed and they meditated without eating or drinking anything.

Atri's meditation was finally over and he felt thirsty. He therefore asked his wife to go and fetch some water so that he might quench his thirst. While Anusuiya was going to fetch water, the river Ganges appeared before her.

Ganges said, 'I am pleased with your Tapa; what boon do you desire?'

Anusuiya replied, 'If you are indeed pleased with me then please make a pond here and fill the pond with your water.'

The holy Ganges obliged. Anusuiya filled her water-pot from the pond and brought the water to her husband. Sage Atri drank the water and found that it was far tastier than the water they were used to. When he asked Anusuiya why this was so, she told him what had happened. Both the husband and the wife came back to the pond.

Anusuiya had earned a lot of Punya (spiritual merit) thanks to her Tapa. So Ganges agreed to stay on, provided that Anusuiya handed over to her whatever Punya she had acquired in one year of Tapa. Anusuiya agreed to this condition.

Meanwhile, Shiva appeared and offered to grant Anusuiya a boon. She requested Shiva that the Lord should always be present in that forest. Shiva consented. Hence, this sacred place came to be known as the 'Atrishvar Tirtha'—the pilgrim place where that form of Shiva appeared which was worshipped by sage Atri.

2.15 Chandra and Somanath—

Twenty-seven of Daksha's daughters were married to the Moon-God Chandra. One of these wives was named Rohini and Chandra loved Rohini more than he loved the other wives. The other wives felt neglected and they complained to their father. Daksha repeatedly warned his son-in-law to devote himself equally to all the twenty-seven wives. But Chandra was in no mood to listen. Daksha thereupon cursed Chandra that he would gradually fade away.

Chandra didn't know what to do. He went and sought advice from Brahma who told him that the only recourse was to pray to Shiva. Chandra went to Prabhas Tirtha and made a Linga on the banks of the river Sarasvati. He prayed to Shiva for six months. At the end of the Tapa Shiva appeared before Chandra and offered to grant him a boon. Chandra explained what the problem was.

Shiva replied, 'Well, Daksha's curse cannot be entirely ignored. Let us have a compromise. During the Krishna-paksha (dark fortnight of the moon) you will wane. And during the Shukla-paksha (the bright part of the lunar fortnight) you will wax. That should satisfy everybody.'

Chandra was delighted. The Linga to which Chandra prayed is known as Somnath, the first of the Jyotirlingas. Shiva is always present at that Tirtha.

2.16 Mallikarjun—

The Gods asked, 'What about the second Jyotirlinga. Mallikarjun?'

Romaharshan replied, 'You already know that Kartikeya felt cheated when Ganesh got married. He decided that he would not live with Shiva and Parvati any longer, and began to live on the mountain Krouncha. Parvati was miserable that her son had left her. She sent Gods, sages, Gandharvas and Apsaras to bring her son back. But Kartikeya would not return. Shiva and Parvati then went to visit Kartikeya themselves, but Kartikeya would not let them get too close.

Shiva and Parvati started to live at a place that was about six miles away from where their son was living. They are always there, so as to be near their son. This place is known as 'Mallikarjun'.

2.17 Dushana and Mahakal—

The third of the Jyotirlingas is Mahakal. The city of Avanti is on the banks of the river Kshipra (Shipra). A Brahmin named Vedapriya used to live in the city of Avanti. He

used to worship Shiva everyday and he had brought up his four sons to do the same. These sons were named Devapriya, Priyamedha, Suvrita and Suvrata.

Not very far away, on a hill named Ratnamala, there used to live an Asura (demon) named Dushana. He was pervert, sinful and evil, he could not stand the idea of the Vedas being read and the religion prescribed in them followed. He went about destroying this righteous religion wherever he could. Dushana got to know that in the city of Avanti there lived four Brahmins who followed the righteous religion and worshipped Shiva. These were Devapriya, Priyamedha, Suvrita and Suvrata. Their father Vedapriya had died by then.

Dushana and his cohorts came and attacked the city of Avanti. They threatened to kill the four Brahmins, but the brothers were not at all perturbed. They continued to pray to Shiva. They bowed in obeisance before the Linga.

Suddenly a tremendous sound was heard and a pit appeared in the ground in front of the Linga. Shiva himself appeared in this pit. Dushana was burnt into ashes from the force of Shiva's roar, and all of his soldiers fled out of terror and the flinging force of the sound waves generated by the roar of Shiva.

The Brahmins prayed that Shiva might always be present at that place, and Shiva agreed. This is the place that is known as Mahakal.

2.18 Vindhya and Omkar—

The fourth of the Jyotirlingas is Omkar. Narad had once gone on a visit to the holy mountain named Vindhya. Vindhya worshipped Narad, but because Vindhya was slightly proud, he also said, 'I am full of all the desirable objects that one can think of.'

Narad replied, 'Perhaps yes, but Mount Sumeru is superior to you because the Gods are always present there.'

Vindhya decided to become the equal of Sumeru. He began to pray to Shiva. For six months he prayed. When Shiva appeared, Vindhya desired that Shiva might always be present there so that he too might become equal to Mt. Sumeru. The Linga that Vindhya worshipped as called Omkar.

2.19 Nar-Narayan and Kedar—

The fifth of the Jyotirlingas is Kedar. In one of Vishnu's incarnations, he revealed himself as the two sages, Nara and Narayana. These two sages prayed for a long time in the hermitage known as Vadrikashram. Near this hermitage there was a peak of the Himalayas named Kedar.

After the two sages had prayed to Shiva for a very long time, Shiva appeared and said, 'I don't understand why the two of you are worshipping me. It is you who should be worshipped. But since you have been praying to me, let me grant you a boon.'

Nara and Narayan desired that Shiva should always be present in the form of a Linga on the peak of Mt. Kedar. So, Shiva kept his promise and established his visible form as a Linga on the summit of this mountain known as Kedar.

2.20 Bhimashankar—

The sixth of the Jyotirlingas is Bhimashankar. You know about Ram and Ravana from the epic story of Ramayana, and you also know that Ram killed not only Ravana but also his brother Kumbhakarna. A Rakshas woman (i.e. a demoness) named Karkati used to live on the mountain named Sahya. Karkati had been married to Kumbhakarna and her son was named Bhima.

One day, Bhima asked Karkati—‘Mother, whose son am I? Why do we live alone in this forest?’

Karkati replied, ‘Let me tell you my sad story. I used to be married to a demon named Viraadha, but he was killed by Lord Ram. Then once Kumbhakarna (the younger brother of Ravana, the king of Lanka) came to me and married me here. Out of this marriage, you were born. Kumbhakarna had promised to take me to Lanka. But he was killed by Ram, and I never got to see Lanka. That is the reason we live here alone. We have nowhere else to go.’

Bhima was very sorry to hear this story. He resolved to avenge himself on Vishnu because he knew that Ram had been an incarnation of Vishnu. For a thousand years he prayed to Brahma with his hands raised up to the sky. When Brahma appeared, Bhima wished for the boon that he might become very strong. This boon was granted to him by Brahma. The first target of Bhima’s attention was the king of Kamarup (located in the north-eastern part of the present day India). The king’s crime was that he was devoted to Vishnu. Bhima attacked the king, plundered and conquered his kingdom, and imprisoned him and his wife. He then proceeded to conquer the rest of the world.

In their prison, the king and his wife started to pray to Shiva. This news was brought to Bhima by the demon guards, and therefore Bhima decided to kill the king. He found the king praying before a Shiva Linga. When Bhima raised his sword to cut off the the king’s head, Shiva appeared from the Linga and repelled the sword with his trident. Bhima flung a spear at Shiva, but this too was driven back by the trident. Whatever weapon was used by Bhima, Shiva’s trident destroyed them all. Finally, Shiva killed Bhima and all his demon companions.

The Gods were gratified and extremely happy, and they prayed that Shiva should always remain in the place in the form of the Linga.

2.21 Vishvanath and Varanasi—

The seventh of the Jyotirlingas is named Vishvanath, and it is located in the city of Varanasi or Kashi. Varanasi is a very sacred place. Brahma himself performed difficult Tapa there. So difficult was the Tapa that Vishnu shook his head in disbelief. When Vishnu shook his head, a jewel (mani) fell down from Vishnu’s ear (‘Karna’). The place where the jewel fall is known as Manikarnika, and it is a famous site of pilgrimage.

Varanasi is not destroyed when the rest of the world is destroyed. Shiva himself raises it on the point of his trident and protects it while destruction rages all around. When the world is re-created, Shiva replaces Varanasi to its original place.

Shiva and Parvati once went to visit Brahma. Brahma began to chant hymns in Shiva's praise with all of his five mouths. One of the mouths however made mistakes in the pronunciation of the hymns. This angered Shiva and he severed the offending head with a blasting gaze of his third eye. But this effectively amounted to the killing of a Brahmin, and thus Shiva had committed a crime. The severed head therefore got stuck to Shiva's back and would not come off, no matter where Shiva went. But when he arrived in Varanasi, the head fell off his back. Shiva realized that Varanasi was a special place and he resolved that he would always be present there.

2.22 Gautam and Trayambak—

Towards the south of the country there was a mountain named Brahmaparvata. There the sage Gautam and his wife Ahilya performed Tapa for ten thousand years. While they were meditating, there were no rains in the forest for a hundred years and there was a shortage of water. Living beings died from the drought. Gautam prayed to Varuna, the God of the ocean and the rain.

Varuna appeared and offered to grant a boon. Gautam requested that there should be rain—'Please grant the boon that it might rain.'

Varuna expressed his inability to grant this boon, and said 'I can't do that; that is beyond my powers. Ask for something else instead.'

Gautam requested for an alternative boon, 'Then let us have a pond in the forest that will always be full of water.'

This was within Varuna's powers, and thus a pond was created. The other sages also began to use water from this pond. Normally, Gautam sent his disciples to fetch water, but the disciples complained that the wives of the other sages did not let them take the water. So Ahilya herself started to fetch the water. The wives of the other sages were annoyed and they continuously pestered Ahilya, but she never reacted. These wives then complained to their respective husbands about Ahilya and Gautam. At first the sages did not listen, but eventually they were convinced that Ahilya and Gautam were wicked. They therefore sought to devise a plan so that these two might be punished.

They began to pray to Ganesh. When Ganesh arrived, the sages said, 'Please grant us the boon that Gautam and Ahilya might be banished from the hermitage.'

Although Ganesh realized that this was an unfair boon, he decided to grant it because he realized that the sages and their evil wives needed to be punished.

Gautam had some fields of paddy and grain. Ganesh adopted the form of a lean and starving cow and began to eat up the crop. Gautam tried to drive away the cow with a blade of grass. But as soon as he struck the cow with this harmless blade of grass, the cow fell down and died. This was a terrible sin—the willful killing of a cow.

The other sages banished Gautam and Ahilya from the hermitage. They had to set up an Ashram (hermitage) that was a fair distance away from this place. The other sages completely disassociated themselves from Gautam and Ahilya. Gautam began to think of ways of performing a penance so that his crime could be annulled and he be acquitted. The other sages told him that he would first have to travel around the world. After that, he would have to offer prayers for a whole month.

So, as part of this punishment, Gautam and Ahilya had first to go around the mountain known as the 'Brahmaparvata' a hundred times and bathe in a hundred pots of water. This would complete the penance. All this Gautam and Ahilya did faithfully. They also prayed for a long time to Shiva.

Shiva appeared before them and offered them a boon. Gautam desired the boon that river Ganges should always be present in the hermitage. Ganges agreed to do so subject to the condition that Shiva and Parvati were also always present in the hermitage.

So, both Parvati and Shiva had to agree to do this. Thus came into being the holy site of Trayambak (the three sided or three forms of the Divinity—Shiva, Parvati and Ganges). This is the eighth of the Jyotirlingas.

The river Ganges which flowed there came to be known as the Godavari (pronounced as Go-daa-vari). So Trayambak is on the banks of the river Godavari. [The word 'Goda' means the 'lap'. Since the river flows in a valley surrounded by hills, it looks that it is in the 'lap' of Shiva and Parvati.]

Now, what happened to the evil sages and their wives? Well, Gautam asked that they might be pardoned. They performed penance by circling Brahmaparvata one hundred and one times, and begged forgiveness from Gautam and Ahilya.

2.23 Ravana and Vaidyanath—

The ninth of the Jyotirlingas is named Vaidyanath. Ravana, the king of the demon race having his capital at Lanka, meditated in the Himalayas to please Lord Shiva. First he prayed on Mount Kailash, but Shiva did not appear. He then went to a place named Vrikshakhandak which was a little towards the south. He prayed there, but Shiva did not appear. Ravana next dug a pit in the earth and started to pray inside the pit. He established a Shiva Linga inside the pit. Shiva still did not appear.

Ravana therefore decided that he would immolate himself. Ravana, as you know, had ten heads. He lit a fire and severing his heads, began to offer them one by one to the fire. When nine of the heads had thus been offered, Shiva appeared.

'Now, stop it; enough is enough,' said Shiva, 'what boon do you want?'

Ravana replied, 'Please grant me the boon that I may be very strong. And please restore my nine heads.'

Shiva granted him these boons. The place where Ravana prayed is known as Vaidyanath.

The Gods were not at all happy that Ravana had become so strong. They were afraid that the demon will now start oppressing them. They therefore sent Narad to create some mischief. Narad met Ravana and asked him why he was looking so happy. Ravana related the story of the boon.

Narad exclaimed in amazement, 'Boon; what boon? Who believes in Shiva? Let me see if you can lift up Mount Kailash. If you can do that, I shall indeed believe that you have become very strong.'

Instigated by Narad, Ravana returned to Kailash and lifted up the mountain. As the mountain shook, Shiva and Parvati were disturbed. Shiva cursed Ravana that soon a 'Being' would be born who would kill Ravana. This being was of course Ram, Vishnu's incarnation.

2.24 Nagesh (pronounced as ‘Naa-gesha’—the Lord of the serpents)—

The tenth of the Jyotirlingas is named Nagesha. There used to be a demon (a Rakshasha) name Daruka. His wife was named Daruki. They lived in a forest on the banks of the western sea. Parvati had granted Daruki the boon that wherever Daruki went, the forest would follow. Using this forest as a base, Daruka and Daruki began to oppress the world. They destroyed the religious sacrifices and killed all the righteous people. In desperation, the survivors went to a powerful sage named Ourva. They told Ourva that he alone could save the world from the depredations of these demons. Ourva cursed the demons that if they committed any violence on earth, they would immediately die.

As soon as the Gods came to know about this curse, they attacked the demons (because they were now assured that the demons were grounded by the curse of the sage’s wrath). The demons were in a fix. If they did not fight with the Gods, they would be slaughtered, and if they fought with the Gods they would die because of Ourva’s curse. They decided that they would go and live in the ocean.

Thanks to the boon that Daruki had received from Parvati, the entire forest was also submerged in the ocean and became the home of the demon race. They did not return to earth. But they imprisoned and killed anyone who traveled in boats across the ocean.

In this way, they once captured a Vaishya (the third of the four classes; the business class) who was devoted to Shiva. The Vaishya set up a Linga in the prison and began to pray to Shiva.

When the demons saw this, they attacked him with weapons so as to kill him. This Vaishya was named Supriya. Shiva gave Supriya a Pashupata, a divine weapon associated with Shiva. With this, the Vaishya killed many demons. The remaining of them were saved by Parvati’s intervention. The Linga that Supriya worshipped is Nagesha.

2.25 Ram and Rameshvar/Rameshwaram—

The eleventh of the Jyotirlingas is named Rameshvar. Ravana had kidnapped Sita and Lord Ram looked for her everywhere. He was aided in his search by the monkeys. The search brought them to the shores of the ocean. While Lord Ram was trying to decide how to cross the ocean, he felt very thirsty. He therefore asked the monkeys to fetch him some water. But when the water was brought, Lord Ram realized that he should not drink the water without first praying to Shiva. Lord Ram constructed a Linga and worshipped it with many fragrant flowers. Such were the powers of Lord Ram’s prayers that Shiva, Parvati and their companions appeared before him. Shiva blessed Lord Ram, and the Lord requested him to stay in that place forever. It is this Linga, on the shores of the ocean, which is known as Rameshvara or Rameshwaram.

2.26 Ghushna and Ghushnesh—

The twelfth and last of the Jyotirlingas is named Ghushnesh. To the south, there is a mountain named Deva. A Brahmin named Sudharma used to live there. His wife was called Sudeha. Husband and wife were righteous and regularly prayed to the Gods. They had only one reason for complaint: they had no son. Sudeha was especially disturbed at this. Other women tended to insult her because she had no son.

Sudharma decided to conduct an experiment. He plucked two flowers and offered them in front of a sacred fire. He mentally associated one of the flowers with having a son and asked his wife to choose a flower. Unfortunately, his wife chose the flower that was not associated with having a son. From this Sudharma concluded that they were not going to have a son and he did his best to console Sudeha. But Sudeha refused to be consoled, she was miserable.

‘Why don’t you marry again?’ asked Sudeha. ‘Perhaps you will then have a son. Marry my niece Gushna.’

Sudharma replied, ‘No, you love her now because she is your niece. But if she does indeed have a son, you will become jealous and will come to hate her.’

Sudeha convinced her husband that this would never happen. So Sudharma married Ghushna. Everyday, Ghushna made a hundred and one Lingas out of clay and worshipped them. When the day’s prayers were over, she immersed the Lingas in a pond. When one lakh (1,00,000) Lingas had thus been worshipped, Ghushna gave birth to a handsome boy. Shiva had taken pity on Sudharma and Ghushna.

But when the son was born, Sudeha’s nature changed. As her husband had warned her, she felt jealous. She thought that Gushna got more important and she was treated like a maid. In the middle of the night, Sudeha slew the boy with a knife and threw the dead body into the pond. This was the pond where the Lingas had been immersed.

As was her wont, Ghushna got up in the morning and began to worship a Linga. Blood was discovered on the bed, the boy could not be found and everyone raised the alarm. But Ghushna was not distracted by this racket and did not leave her prayers. Shiva was so impressed with Ghushna’s devotion that he restored her son back to life. He also wished to kill the evil Sudeha with his trident, but Gushna begged for her aunt’s life and Shiva spared Sudeha. Ghushna’s act of forgiveness so impressed Shiva that he wished to grant Ghushna another boon, apart from restoring her son.

Ghushna wished that Shiva should always be present in a Linga near the pond. This is known as Ghushnesha.

2.27 Arjun and Shiva—

Duryodhan robbed the Pandavas of their rightful share of the kingdom in a game of dice. As a result of this, the Pandavas had to spend many years in the forest. While they were in the forest, Vedavyas came to visit the Pandavas. Vedavyas told them that they should pray to Shiva. But since Arjun was the best suited amongst the Pandavas for worshipping Shiva, Vedavyas taught Arjun a special mantra (incantation). Then he asked Arjun to go to Mount Indrakila (literally meaning ‘the fortress of Shiva’) and pray to Shiva there.

Mount Indrakila was on the banks of the river Bhagirathi. Arjun went to Mount Indrakila. He made a Linga out of clay and started to pray to Shiva. The news of Arjun's wonderful Tapa spread everywhere. Arjun stood on one leg and continuously chanted the Mantra that Vedavyas had taught him.

Suddenly, Arjun saw a boar. He thought that this fierce boar might have come to distract him from his Tapa. Alternatively, it might be a relative of the several demons that he had killed and therefore might wish him harm. Thinking this, Arjun picked up his bow and arrow and let fly an arrow at the boar. Meanwhile, Shiva had decided to subject Arjun to a test and he had also arrived at the spot disguised as a hunter. When Arjun shot an arrow at the boar, so did Shiva. Shiva's arrow struck the boar in its hindquarters and Arjun's arrow struck the boar in its mouth. The boar fell down dead.

A dispute started between Arjun and the hunter about who had killed the boar. Each claimed it as his own hunt. They began to fight. But whatever weapons were hurled by Shiva were easily repelled all of Arjun's weapons. When all the weapons were exhausted, the two started to wrestle. After the fight had gone on for a while, Shiva gave up his disguise of a hunter and displayed his true form to Arjun.

Arjun was ashamed that he had been fighting with the very person to whom he had been praying. So he pleaded for forgiveness from Shiva.

Shiva said, 'It is all right. I was just trying to test you. Your weapons have been like offerings to me because you are my devotee. Tell me, what boon do you wish to be granted?'

Arjun wanted the boon that he may obtain glory, majesty and fame on earth. Shiva gave Arjun his formidable weapon known as Pashupata. This was such a divine and powerful weapon that its possession made Arjun invincible.

2.28 The Sudarshan Chakra (a circular blade with serrated, sharp-edges that Lord Vishnu uses as his weapon known as the Chakra or discus)—

The Sudarshan Chakra (a bladed discus) was Vishnu's weapon. Vishnu received this wonderful weapon as a result of Shiva's grace.

Many years ago, the demons oppressed the Gods and the Gods went to Vishnu for deliverance. Vishnu said that the demons were so powerful, that he would first have to worship Shiva if something was to be done about the demons (the Asurs). Vishnu went to Mount Kailash and began to pray to Shiva. He chanted many mantras, but there was no sign of Shiva. Shiva has a thousand names and Vishnu next started to chant these names one by one as a form of repeating the Lord's Mantras. Each day he chanted the thousand names and offered a thousand lotus flowers to Shiva.

Shiva decided to test Vishnu. One day he stole a lotus flower from the thousand that were to be offered. When Vishnu realized that there was one lotus flower less, he gouged out his own eye and offered it in place of the missing lotus flower. Shiva was now so pleased that he appeared before Vishnu. He offered to grant Vishnu a boon.

Vishnu said, 'You know that the powerful demons have been oppressing the Gods. I need a weapon to fight the demons with. Please give me a weapon.'

Shiva then gave Vishnu the Sudarshan Chakra. And with this weapon, Vishnu killed the demons."

2.29 Shiva's Thousand Names—

When the sages heard this story, they said—‘Romaharshan, what are these thousand names of Shiva that you have mentioned? Tell us about them.’

Romaharshan obliged. For convenience, let us list these thousand names of Lord Shiva in one hundred groups, each group having ten names.

- (1) Shiva, Hara, Mrida, Rudra, Pushkara, Pushpalochana, Arthigamya, Sadachara, Sharva, Shambhu. [Total = 10]
- (2) Maheshvara, Chandrapida, Chandramouli, Vishva, Vishvamareshvara, Vedantasarasandoha, Kapali, Nilalohita, Dhyanaadhara, Aparicchadya. [Total = 10 + 10 = 20]
- (3) Gouribharta, Ganeshvara, Ashtamurti, Vishvamurti, Trivargasvargasadhana, Jnanagamy, Dridaprajna, Devadeva, Trilochana, Vamadeva. [Total = 20 + 10 = 30]
- (4) Madadeva, Patu, Parivrida, Drida, Vishvarupa, Virupaksha, Vagisha, Shuchisattama, Sarvapramanasamvadi, Vrishanka. [Total = 30 + 10 = 40]
- (5) Vrishavahana, Isha, Pinaki, Khatvanga, Chitravesha, Chirantana, Tamohara, Mahayogi, Gopta, Brahma. [Total = 40 + 10 = 50]
- (6) Dhurjati, Kalakala, Krittivasah, Subhaga, Pranavatmaka, Unnadhra, Purusha, Jushya, Durvasa, Purashasana. [Total = 50 + 10 = 60]
- (7) Divyayudha, Skandaguru, Parameshthi, Paratpara, Anadimadhyanidhana, Girisha, Girijadhava, Kuberabandhu, Shrikanatha, Lokavarnottama. [Total = 60 + 10 = 70]
- (8) Mridu, Samadhivedya, Kodandi, Nilakantha, Parashvadi, Vishalaksha, Mrigavyadha, Suresha, Suryatapana, Dharmadhama. [Total = 70 + 10 = 80]
- (9) Kshamakshetra, Bhagavana, Bhaganetrabhida, Ugra, Pashupati, Tarkshya, Priyabhakta, Parantapa, Data, Dayakara. [Total = 80 + 10 = 90]
- (10) Daksha, Karmandi, Kamashasana, Shmashananilaya, Suksha, Shmashanastha, Maheshvara, Lokakarta, Mrigapati, Mahakarta. [Total = 90 + 10 = 100]
- (11) Mahoushadhi, Uttara, Gopati, Gopta, Jnanagamy, Puratana, Niti, Suniti, Shuddhatma, Soma. [Total = 100 + 10 = 110]
- (12) Somarata, Sukhi, Sompapa, Amritapa, Soumya, Mahatejah, Mahadyuti, Tejomaya, Amritamaya, Annamaya. [Total = 110 + 10 = 120]
- (13) Suhapati, Ajatashatru, Aloka, Sambhavya, Havyavahana, Lokakara, Vedakara,

Sutrakara, Sanatana, Maharshi. [Total = 120 + 10 = 130]

(14) Kapilacharya, Vishvadipti, Vilochana, Pinakapani, Bhudeva, Svastida, Svastikrita, Sudhi, Dhatridhama, Dhamakara. [Total = 130 + 10 = 140]

(15) Sarvaga, Sarvagochara, Brahmasrika, Vishvasrika, Sarga, Karnikara, Priya, Kavi, Shakha, Vishakha. [Total = 140 + 10 = 150]

(16) Goshakha, Shiva, Bhishaka, Anuttama, Gangaplavodaka, Bhaya, Pushkala, Sthapati, Sthira, Vijitatma. [Total = 150 + 10 = 160]

(17) Vishayatma, Bhutavahana, Sarathi, Sagana, Ganakaya, Sukirti, Chinnasamshaya, Kamadeva, Kamapala, Bhasmoddhulita-vigraha. [Total = 160 + 10 = 170]

(18) Bhasmapriya, Bhasmashyai, Kami, Kanta, Kritagama, Samavarta, Nivritatma, Dharmapunja, Sadashiva, Akalmasha. [Total = 170 + 10 = 180]

(19) Chaturvahu, Durvasa, Durasada, Durlabha, Durgama, Durga, Sarvayudhavisharada, Adhyatmayoganilaya, Sutantu, Tantuvardhana. [Total = 180 + 10 = 190]

(20) Shubhanga, Lokasaranga, Jagadisha, Janardana, Bhasmashuddhikara, Meru, Ojasvi, Shuddhavigraha, Asadhya, Sadhusadhya. [Total = 190 + 10 = 200]

(21) Bhrityamarkatarupadhrika, Hiranyareta, Pourana, Ripujivahara, Bala, Mahahrada, Mahagarta, Vyali, Siddhavrindaravandita, Vyaghracharmambara. [Total = 200 + 10 = 210]

(22) Mahabhuta, Mahanidhi, Amritasha, Amritavapu, Panchajanya, Prabhanjana, Panchavimshatitattvastha, Parijata, Para-vara, Sulabha. [Total = 210 + 10 = 220]

(23) Suvrata, Shura, Brahmavedanidhi, Nidhi, Varnashramaguru, Varni, Shatrujita, Shatrutapana, Ashrama, Kshapana. [Total = 220 + 10 = 230]

(24) Kshama, Jnanavana, Achaleshvara, Pramanabhuta, Durjneya, Suparna, Vayuvahana, Dhanurdhara, Dhanurveda, Gunarashi. [Total = 230 + 10 = 240]

(25) Gunakara, Satyasatyapara, Dina, Dharmaga, Ananda, Dharmasadhana, Anantadrishti, Danda, Damayita, Dama. [Total = 240 + 10 = 250]

(26) Abhivadya, Mahamaya, Vishvakarma, Visharada, Vitaraga, Vinitatma, Tapasvi, Bhutabhavana, Unmattavesha, Pracchanna. [Total = 250 + 10 = 260]

(27) Jitakama, Ajitapriya, Kalyanaprakriti, Kalpa, Sarvalokaprajapati, Tarasvi, Tavaka, Dhimana, Pradhanaprabhu, Avyaya. [Total = 260 + 10 = 270]

(28) Lokapala, Antarhitatma, Kalpadi, Kamalekshana, Vedashastrarthatattvajna,

Aniyama, Niyatashraya, Chandra, Surya, Shani. [Total = 270 + 10 = 280]

(29) Ketu, Varanga, Vidrumacchavi, Bhaktivashya, Anagha, Parabrahmamrigavanarpana, Adri, Adryalaya, Kanta, Paramatma. [Total = 280 + 10 = 290]

(30) Jagadguru, Sarvakarmalaya, Tushta, Mangalya, Mangalavrita, Mahatapa, Dirghatapa, Sthavishtha, Sthavira, Dhruva. [Total = 290 + 10 = 300]

(31) Aha, Samvatsara, Vyapti, Pramana, Parmatapa, Samvatsarakara, Mantra-pratyaya, Sarvadarshana, Aja, Sarveshvara. [Total = 300 + 10 = 310]

(32) Siddha, Mahareta, Mahabala, Yogi, Yogya, Siddhi, Mahaateja, Sarvadi, Agraha, Vasu. [Total = 310 + 10 = 320]

(33) Vasumana, Satya, Sarvapaphara, Sukirti, Shobhana, Shrimana, Avanmanasagochara, Amritashashvata, Shanta, Vanahasta. [Total = 320 + 10 = 330]

(34) Pratapavana, Kamandalundhara, Dhanvi, Vedanga, Vedavita, Muni, Bhrajishnu, Bhojana, Bhokta, Lokanantha. [Total = 330 + 10 = 340]

(35) Duradhara, Atindriya, Mahamaya, Sarvavasa, Chatushpatha, Kalayogi, Mahanada, Mahotsaha, Mahabala, Mahabuddhi. [Total = 340 + 10 = 350]

(36) Mahavirya, Bhutachari, Purandara, Nishachara, Pretachari, Mahashakti, Mahadyuti, Ahirdeshyavapu, Shrimana, Sarvacharyamanogati. [Total = 350 + 10 = 360]

(37) Vahushruta, Niyatatma, Dhruva, Adhruva, Sarvashaska, Ojastejodyutidara, Nartaka, Nrityapriya, Nrityanitya, Prakashatma. [Total = 360 + 10 = 370]

(38) Prakashaka, Spashtakshara, Budha, Mantra, Samana, Sarasamplava, Yugadikrida, Yugavarta, Gambhira, Vrishavahana. [Total = 370 + 10 = 380]

(39) Ishta, Vishishta, Shishteshta, Shalabha, Sharabha, Dhanu, Tirtharupa, Tirthanama, Tirthadrishya, Stuta. [Total = 380 + 10 = 390]

(40) Arthada, Apamnidhi, Adhishthana, Vijaya, Jayakalavita, Pratishthita, Pramanajna, Hiranyakavacha, Hari, Vimochana. [Total = 390 + 10 = 400]

(41) Suragana, Vidyasha, Vindusamshraya, Balarupa, Vikarta, Balonmatta, Gahana, Guha, Karana, Karta. [Total = 400 + 10 = 410]

(42) Sarvabandhavimochana, Vyavasaya, Vyavasthana, Sthanada, Jagadadija, Guruda, Lalita, Abhedha, Bhavatmatmasamsthita, Vireshvara. [Total = 410 + 10 = 420]

(43) Virabhadra, Virasanavidhi, Virata, Virachudamani, Vetta, Tivrananda, Nadidhara, Ajnadhara, Tridhuli, Shipivishta. [Total = 420 + 10 = 430]

- (44) Shivalaya, Balakhilya, Mahachapa, Tigmamshu, Badhira, Khaga, Adhirma, Susharana, Subrahmanya, Sudhapati. [Total = 430 + 10 = 440]
- (45) Maghavana, Koushika, Gomana, Virama, Sarvasadhana, Lalataksha, Vishvadeha, Sara, Samsarachakrabhrita, Amoghadanda. [Total = 440 + 10 = 450]
- (46) Madhyastha, Hiranya, Brahmavarchasi, Paramartha, Para, Mayi, Shambara, Vyaghralochana, Ruchi, Virinchi. [Total = 450 + 10 = 460]
- (47) Svarbandhu, Vachaspati, Aharpati, Ravi, Virochana, Skanda, Shasta, Vaivasvata, Yama, Yukti. [Total = 460 + 10 = 470]
- (48) Unnatakirti, Sanuraga, Paranjaya, Kailashadhipati, Kanta, Savita, Ravilochana, Vidvattama, Vitabhaya, Vishvabharta. [Total = 470 + 10 = 480]
- (49) Anivarita, Nitya, Niyatakalyana, Punyashravanakirtana, Durashrava, Vishvasaha, Dhyeya, Duhsvapnanashana, Uttarana, Dushkritiha. [Total = 480 + 10 = 490]
- (50) Vijneya, Duhsaha, Bhava, Anadi, Bhurbhuvakshi, Kiriti, Ruchirangada, Janana, Janajanmadi, Pritimana. [Total = 490 + 10 = 500]
- (51) Nitimana, Dhava, Vasishtha, Kashyapa, Bhanu, Bhima, Bhimaparakrama, Pranava, Satpatchachara, Mahakasha. [Total = 500 + 10 = 510]
- (52) Mahaghana, Janmadhipa, Mahadeva, Sakalagamaparaga, Tattva, Tattavit, Ekatma, Vibhu, Vishvavibhushana, Rishi. [Total = 510 + 10 = 520]
- (53) Brahmin, Aishvaryajanmamrityujaratiga, Panchayajnasamutpatti, Vishvesha, Vimalodaya, Atmayoni, Anadyanta, Vatsala, Bhaktalokadhrika, Gayatrivallabha. [Total = 520 + 10 = 530]
- (54) Pramshu, Vishvavasa, Prabhakara, Shishu, Giriraha, Samrata, Sushena, Surashatruha, Amogha, Arishtanemi. [Total = 530 + 10 = 540]
- (55) Kumuda, Vigatajvara, Svayamjyoti, Tanujyoti, Achanchala, Atmajyoti, Pingala, Kapilashmashru, Bhalanetra, Trayitanu. [Total = 540 + 10 = 550]
- (56) Jnanaskandamahaniti, Vishvotipatti, Upaplava, Bhaga, Vivasvana, Aditya, Yogapara, Divaspati, Kalyanagunanama, Papaha. [Total = 550 + 10 = 560]
- (57) Punyadarshana, Udarakirti, Udyogi, Sadyogi, Sadasanmaya, Nakshatramali, Nakesha, Svadhishtanapadashraya, Pavitra, Paphari. [Total = 560 + 10 = 570]
- (58) Manipura, Nabhogati, Hrit, Pundarikasina, Shatru, Shranta, Vrishakapi, Ushna, Grihapati, Krishna. [Total = 570 + 10 = 580]

- (59) Paramartha, Anarthanashana, Adharmashatru, Ajneya, Puruhuta, Purushruta, Brahmagarbha, Vrihadgarbha, Dharmadhenu, Dhanagama. [Total = 580 + 10 = 590]
- (60) Jagaddhitaishi, Sugata, Kumara, Kushalagama, Hiranyavarna, Jyotishmana, Nanbhutarata, Dhvani, Araga, Nayandyaksha. [Total = 590 + 10 = 600]
- (61) Vishvamisra, Dhaneshvara, Brahmajyoti, Vasudhama, Mahajyotianuttama, Matamaha, Matarishva, Nabhasvana, Nagaharadhrika, Pulastya. [Total = 600 + 10 = 610]
- (62) Pulaha, Agastya, Jatukarnya, Parashara, Niravarananirvara, Vairanchya, Vishtarashrava, Atmabhu, Aniruddha, Atri. [Total = 610 + 10 = 620]
- (63) Jnanamurti, Mahayasha, Lokaviragranti, Vira, Chanda, Satyaparakrama, Vyalakapa, Mahakalpa, Kalpaviriksha, Kaladhara. [Total = 620 + 10 = 630]
- (64) Alankarishnu, Achala, Rochishnu, Vikramonnata, Ayuhshabdapati, Vegi, Plavana, Shikhisarathi, Asamsrishta, Atithi. [Total = 630 + 10 = 640]
- (65) Shatrupreamathi, Padapasana, Vasushrava, Pratapa, Havyavaha, Vishvabhajana, Japaya, Jaradishamana, Lohitatma, Tanunapata. [Total = 640 + 10 = 650]
- (66) Vrihadashva, Nabhoyoni, Supratika, Tamisraha, Nidagha, Tapana, Megha, Svaksha, Parapuranjaya, Sukhanila. [Total = 650 + 10 = 660]
- (67) Sunishpanna, Surabhi, Shishiratmaka, Vasanta, Madhava, Grishma, Nabhasya, Vijavahana, Angira, Guru. [Total = 660 + 10 = 670]
- (68) Atreya, Vimala, Vishvavahana, Pavana, Sumati, Vidvana, Travidya, Naravahana, Manobuddhi, Ahamkara. [Total = 670 + 10 = 680]
- (69) Kshetrajna, Kshetrapalaka, Jamadagni, Balanidhi, Vigala, Vishvaglava, Aghora, Anuttara, Yajna, Shreye. [Total = 680 + 10 = 690]
- (70) Nishshreyahpatha, Shaila, Gaganakundabha, Danavari, Arindama, Rajanijanaka, Charuvishalya, Lokakalpadhrika, Chaturveda, Chatrubhava. [Total = 690 + 10 = 700]
- (71) Chatura, Chaturapriya, Amlaya, Samamlaya, Tirthavedashivalaya, Vahurupa, Maharupa, Sarvarupa, Charachara, Nyayanirmayaka. [Total = 700 + 10 = 710]
- (72) Nyayi, Nyayagamy, Nirantara, Sahasramurddha, Devendra, Sarvasastraprabhanjana, Munda, Virupa, Vikranta, Dandi. [Total = 710 + 10 = 720]
- (73) Danta, Gunottama, Pingalaksha, Janadhyaksha, Nilagriva, Niramaya, Sahasravahu, Sarvesha, Sharanya, Sarvalokadhrika. [Total = 720 + 10 = 730]

- (74) Padmasana, Paramjyoti, Parampara, Paramfala, Padmagarbha, Mahagarbha, Vishvagarbha, Vichakshana, Characharajna, Varada. [Total = 730 + 10 = 740]
- (75) Varesha, Mahabala, Devasuraguru, Deva, Devasuramahashraya, Devadideva, Devagni, Devagnisukhada, Prabhu, Devasureshvara. [Total = 740 + 10 = 750]
- (76) Divya, Devasuramaheshvara, Devadevamaya, Achintya, Devadevatmasambhava, Sadyoni, Asuravyaghra, Devasimha, Divakara, Vibudhagravara. [Total = 750 + 10 = 760]
- (77) Shreshtha, Sarvadevottamottama, Shivajnana, Shrimana, Shikhisriparvatapriya, Vajrahasta, Siddhakhadgi, Narasimhanipatana, Brahmachari, Lokachari. [Total = 760 + 10 = 770]
- (78) Dharmachari, Dhanadhipa, Nandi, Nandishvara, Ananta, Nagnavratadhara, Shuchi, Lingadhyaksha, Suradhyaksha, Yogadhyaksha. [Total = 770 + 10 = 780]
- (79) Yugavaha, Svadharma, Svargata, Svargakhara, Svaramayasvana, Vanadhyaksha, Vijakarta, Dharmakrit, Dharmasambhava, Dambha. [Total = 780 + 10 = 790]
- (80) Alobha, Arthavit, Shambhu, Sarvahbutamaheshvara, Shmashananilaya, Trayaaksha, Setu, Apratimakriti, Lokottaras-futaloka, Trayambak. [Total = 790 + 10 = 800]
- (81) Nagabhushana, Andhakari, Makhaveshi, Vishnukandharapatana, Hinadosha, Akshayaguna, Dakshari, Pushadantabhit, Dhurjati, Khandaparashu. [Total = 800 + 10 = 810]
- (82) Sakala, Nishkala, Anagha, Akala, Sakaladhara, Pandurabha, Mrida, Nata, Purna, Purayita. [Total = 810 + 10 = 820]
- (83) Punya, Sukumara, Sulochana, Samageyapriya, Akrura, Punyakirti, Anaymaya, Manojava, Tirthakara, Jatila. [Total = 820 + 10 = 830]
- (84) Jiviteshvara, Jivitantakara, Nitya, Vasureta, Vasuprada, Sadgati, Satkriti, Siddhi, Sajjati, Kalakantaka. [Total = 830 + 10 = 840]
- (85) Kaladhara, Mahakala, Bhuasatyapraryana, Lokalavanyakarta, Lokottarasukhalaya, Chandrasanjivana, Shasta, Lokaguda, Mahadhipa, Lokabandhu. [Total = 840 + 10 = 850]
- (86) Lokanatha, Kritajna, Krittibhushana, Anapaya, Akshara, Kanta, Sarvashtarahadvara, Tejomaya, Dyutidhara, Lokagranti. [Total = 850 + 10 = 860]
- (87) Anu, Shuchismita, Prasannatma, Durjjeya, Duratikrama, Jyotirmaya, Jagannatha, Nirakra, Jaleshvara, Tumbavina. [Total = 860 + 10 = 870]
- (88) Mahakopa, Vishoka, Shokanashana, Trilokapa, Triloksha, Sarvashuddhi, Adhokshaja, Avyaktalakshana, Deva, Vyaktavyakta. [Total = 870 + 10 = 880]

(89) Vishampati, Varashila, Varaguna, Saramandhana, Maya, Brahma, Vishnu, Prajapala, Hamsa, Hamsagati. [Total = 880 + 10 = 890]

(90) Vaya, Vedha, Vidhata, Dhata, Srashta, Harta, Chaturmukha, Kailasashikharavasi, Sarvavasi, Sadagati. [Total = 890 + 10 = 900]

(91) Hiranyagarbha, Druhina, Bhutapa, Bhupati, Sadyogi, Yogavit, Yogi, Varada, Brahmanapriya, Devapriya. [Total = 900 + 10 = 910]

(92) Devanatha, Devajna, Devachintaka, Vishamaksha, Vishalaksha, Vrishada, Vrishavardhana, Nirmama, Nirahamkara, Nirmoha. [Total = 910 + 10 = 920]

(93) Nirupadrava, Darpha, Darpada, Dripta, Sarvabhutaparivartaka, Sahasrajit, Sahasrarchi, Prabhava, Snigddhaprakriti, Sahasrarchi. [Total = 920 + 10 = 930]

(94) Bhutinashana, Artha, Anartha, Mahakosha, Parakaryaikapandita, Nishkantaka, Kritananda, Nirvyaja, Vyajamardana, Sattvavana. [Total = 930 + 10 = 940]

(95) Sattvika, Satyakirti, Snehakritagama, Akampita, Gunagrahi, Naikatma, Naikakarmakrit, Suprita, Sumukha, Suksha. [Total = 940 + 10 = 950]

(96) Sukara, Dakshinaila, Nandiskandhadhara, Dhurya, Prakata, Pritivardhana, Aparajita, Sarvasattva, Govinda, Adhrita. [Total = 520 + 10 = 960]

(97) Sattvavahana, Svadhrita, Siddha, Putamurti, Yashodhana, Varahabhringadhrika, Bhringi, Balavana, Ekanayaka, Shrutiprakasha. [Total = 960 + 10 = 970]

(98) Shrutimana, Ekabandhu, Anekakrit, Shrivatsalashivarambha, Shantabhadra, Sama, Yasha, Bhushaya, Bhushana, Bhuti. [Total = 970 + 10 = 980]

(99) Bhutakrit, Bhutabhavana, Akampa, Bhaktikaya, Kalaha, Nilalohita, Satyavrata, Mahatyagi, Nityashantiparayana, Pararthavritti. [Total = 980 + 10 = 990]

(100) Vivikshu, Visharada, Shubhada, Shubhakarta, Shubhanama, Shubha, Anarhita, Aguna, Sakshi, Akarta. [Total = 990 + 10 = 1000]

[Three extra names are found in addition to the the above list of 1000 names of Lord Shiva. They are the following: (1) Snigddhaprakritidakshina, (2) Bhutabhavyabhavannatha, (3) Prabhava. Total = 3 extra names.]

It is not known why these extra names have been included. Usually 1 extra name is added if the total number of names is 100 or 1000, so as to make the total number of names to 101 or 1001 respectively as it is considered an auspicious number. The other option is to add 8 names to the list to make it either 108 or 1008 which are also auspicious numbers. But in this Shiva Puran there are 3 extra names, which I could not understand why it is so.]

2.30 Shivaratri Vrata (the religious sacrament of fasting dedicated to worship Lord Shiva)—

Shivaratri is the Tithi (lunar day of the Hindu calendar) on which Brahma and Vishnu had worshipped Shiva. A 'Vrata' is a special religious rite, ritual or function by way of sacrament that is performed on a special occasion. A 'Vrata' usually involves abstaining from food for the whole day till the auspicious moment for eating arrives. A Vrata observed on Shivaratri (the night dedicated to Shiva) is particularly important. It brings undying auspiciousness and holiness as well as all-round good and welfare to the practitioner.

To observe this Vrata, one stays up at night and prays to a Linga. One also has to observe a fast.

The story that is associated with this Vrata is the following—

There used to be a hunter named Rurudruha. He was not at all righteous. In fact, he was very evil and cruel. He killed many deer and was also a robber and a thief. Naturally, Rurudruha knew nothing about the auspicious occasion of the Shivaratri Vrata as he had never attempted to do it and learn anything about it.

But it happened to be Shivaratri when the hunter's parents, wife and children felt very hungry. They asked Rurudruha to go and get some meat so that they might eat. The hunter went to the forest to kill deer, but could not find any. It was already evening and no game was to be seen. Rurudruha found a water-hole and decided that he would keep a vigil there. Sooner or later, some animal was bound to turn up. He climbed up onto a bilva tree that was by the side of the water-hole. And in case he should feel thirsty, he kept a pot full of water next to him. There he waited.

Soon a doe turned up to drink water. The hunter picked up his bow and arrow. When he did so, the tree shook and a few Bilva leaves (the wood-apple tree; *Aegle marmelos*) fell on a Linga that was right under the tree. Bilva leaves are sacred to Shiva. Some water spilled from the pot and also fell on the Linga. Rurudruha did not of course know this.

But the poor doe saw the hunter, and it pleaded—'Don't kill me right now. My children and husband are at home. Let me go and bid them farewell. When I return, you are welcome to kill me.'

The hunter was in no mood to let the doe go. Does an animal return to be killed? But the doe took an oath and Rurudruha let her go. After a short while, another doe turned up to drink water. The two does were sisters and both of them married to the same deer. As before, the tree shook and Bilva leaves and some water fell on the Linga.

The second doe saw the hunter and said, 'Wait for sometime before you kill me. Let me say goodbye to my husband and children.'

The hunter was reluctant to let the doe go. But the second doe also took an oath that she would return. So Rurudruha decided to wait.

After the doe had gone, the deer turned up to drink water. And when the hunter picked up his bow and arrow, Bilva leaves and water again fell on the Linga.

The deer said, 'Hunter, let me go now. I will come back and you can kill then. I wish to bid adieu to my two wives and children.' The deer also took on oath that he would return and Rurudruha let him go.

After some time had passed, the two does and the deer came back to where Rurudruha was. Each said, 'Kill me and spare the others. They need to stay alive to look after the children.'

The baby deer had also accompanied their parents. They said, 'Kill us. We don't wish to stay alive when our parents are gone.'

The hunter was so flummoxed at these developments that the tree shook again. Bilva leaves and water fell on the Linga. Shiva now took pity on Rurudruha and removed all evil thoughts from his mind. The hunter spared the deer.

Shiva himself appeared before Rurudruha and said, 'From now on, your name will be Guha. You will be so blessed and fortunate that Lord Ram himself will become your guest.' [As it later turned out, Shiva's boon bore fruits for Guha, and Lord Ram indeed came to him during his journey to the forest which culminated in the slaying of the demon king Ravana. This is narrated in the epic story of Ramayana.]

This story demonstrates that even if Shivaratri Vrata is performed unconsciously, great auspiciousness and virtues are obtained.

2.31 Veda-nidhi—

In the city of Avanti there used to be a righteous Brahmin. He had two sons, Sunidhi and Veda-nidhi. Veda-nidhi was wicked. The king of Avanti was so pleased with the Brahmin that he gave him a golden bangle as a present. The Brahmin took it home and gave it to his wife to store safely. There it was discovered by Veda-nidhi. Veda-nidhi stole the ornament and gave it to a dancing-girl.

It so happened that the king was watching a dance performed by the dancing-girl and he noticed the bangle on the girl's hand. He found out from the girl that the bangle had been given to her by Veda-nidhi. He retrieved the bangle and called the Brahmin.

The king enquired, 'Do you remember the golden bangle that I had given you? Can you please return it to me? I need it.'

The Brahmin hurried home and asked his wife for the bangle. But it could not be found and they realized that it was Veda-nidhi who had stolen it. Veda-nidhi was banished from his parents' house. He wandered around here and there and begged food so that he might eat. One day, he did not get any food at all. That day happened to be shivaratri. But Veda-nidhi didn't know this. He saw several people going to Shiva's temple with all sorts of offerings, including food, in their hands. The evil Brahmin thought that he might be able to steal and eat this food. He followed the devotees to the temple and waited till they should fall asleep.

When they did so, Veda-nidhi crept up to the place where the offerings had been placed. This was right in front of the Linga. It was very dark there and Veda-nidhi could not see very well. A lamp was burning and the shadow of the lamp fell on the Linga. Veda-nidhi tore off a piece of cloth from his clothing and stuffed it into the lamp so that it might burn better. The flame rose and in its light the shadow on the Linga disappeared.

But when Veda-nidhi was about to steal the food, the devotees awoke. They gave chase to the thief and shot at him with arrows. These arrows struck Veda-nidhi and he died. Yama's messengers arrived and wanted to take the evil Brahmin to hell. But Shiva's companions also arrived and they would not permit Veda-nidhi to be taken to hell. The Brahmin had fasted on shivaratri day, he stayed awake at night and he had removed the shadow from the Linga. These were acts of the faithful, even if they had been performed unconsciously. Veda-nidhi's sins were all forgiven.

2.32 Chandrashekhar—

Parvati once asked Shiva, 'Lord! Tell me, why do you wear a crescent moon on your forehead? What is the story behind this?'

Then Shiva narrated this mystical story to her.

Earlier, Parvati had been born as Sati, the daughter of Daksha. As Sati, she had been married to Shiva. Since Daksha insulted her husband Shiva, Sati gave up her life. When Sati died, Shiva no longer found pleasure in anything. He began to live in the forest and started to perform Tapa. Such was the power of the Tapa that any trees or mountains that were near the place where Shiva was meditating used to be burnt into ashes. As Shiva moved from place to place, the earth started to burn and scorch. The Gods were greatly alarmed at these developments. They went to Brahma (the old patriarch of creation and its creator) to seek his advice as to how the earth might be saved.

Brahma said, 'Let us take the Moon God known as 'Chandra' with us, and present him as a wonderful gift to Shiva. Chandra's visage is so pleasing and beautiful that Shiva is sure to feel happy and pacified.'

The Gods placed Chandra in a pot of Amrit (the ambrosia of eternity and bliss). They also had another pot that was full of poison. With these two pots they went to Shiva and offered him the pots.

Brahma said to Shiva—'The Gods have brought two pots. Please accept them.'

Shiva first accepted the pot that contained the Amrit. As soon as he did this, the crescent moon came out and got fixed to Shiva's forehead. Next Shiva accepted the pot of poison and touched it with his middle finger. He touched his throat with the finger and the throat became blue. That is the reason why Shiva is known as 'Neel-kantha', the Lord of the blue throat. And because the moon is like a crown on Shiva's forehead, the Lord came to be known as 'Chandra-shekhar'.

At the sight of the moon, Shiva was pacified.

2.33 The Ashes—

Parvati said, 'I understand about the moon now. But why do you always smear ashes on your body? What is the reason for that?'

Shiva told her the story related to this.

There used to be a Brahmin who was descended from the great sage Bhrigu. This

Brahmin began a very difficult Tapa. The tremendous heat of the summer made no difference to him. Nor was he disturbed by the downpour of the monsoon. He was only interested in meditating. When he felt hungry, he used to ask the bears, the deer, the lions and the jackals to fetch him some fruits. The wild beasts had lost all fear of him, they served him instead. Later on, the Brahmin gave up eating fruits also. He ate only green leaves. And because leaves are called 'Parna', the Brahmin came to be known as 'Parnada'.

He performed Tapa for many years. One day, Parnada was cutting some grass and his scythe slipped and sliced off his middle finger. Parnada was amazed to find that no blood issued from the severed joint. Instead, a sap like that which issues from plants came out. Parnada's vanity knew no bounds. He realized that his was due to the fact that he had been living on green leaves for such long time. Parnada began to jump with delight. Shiva decided that Parnada needed to be taught a lesson.

He disguised himself as a Brahmin and arrived before Parnada.

Shiva asked him, 'Why are you so happy?'

Parnada replied, 'Can't you see? My Tapa has been so successful that my blood has become like the sap of plants.'

Shiva advised him, 'This sort of vanity destroys the fruits/rewards of all Tapa. What have you got to be so proud about? Your blood has only turned into the sap of plants. What happens when you burn plants? They are reduced to ash. Look, I myself have performed so much Tapa that my blood has turned into ash.'

To prove his point, Shiva sliced-off his middle finger, and ash poured out of the cut. Parnada was impressed. He realized that there was nothing that he could be proud about; here was a far greater hermit than he. He asked Shiva who he was and Shiva then displayed his true form to Parnada.

Ever since that day, there have always been ashes on Shiva's body. In other words, Shiva is always covered in ash.

2.34 Nandi, the Bull—

There was a sage named Shilada. He once saw that his ancestors were being tortured in hell. When he tried to find out why this was so, he was told that this was because Shilada did not yet have a son. To obtain a son, Shilada began to pray to Shiva. He prayed for a thousand years. At the end of the Tapa, Shiva appeared and offered to grant Shilada a boon. Shilada wanted the boon that he might have a virtuous son.

A few days later, when Shilada was ploughing the land, he discovered a baby boy on the blade of the plough. The boy was as bright as the sun and the fire. Shilada was frightened and started to run away.

But the boy called out after him, 'Father, stop. Father, stop!'

A voice was then heard from the sky. This voice told Shilada that this was the son he had wanted. Since this son would make everyone happy, he was to be named Nandi.

Shilada brought Nandi home to his hermitage. He taught his son the Vedas, the arts of the medicine and fighting, dancing and singing and several other sacred texts. Nandi mastered all these within fifteen days.

When Nandi was seven years old, two powerful sages arrived in Shilada's hermitage. Their names were Mitra and Varuna. Shilada worshipped them and presented Nandi before them. The sages blessed Nandi with the words—'Be learned, be faithful to your teacher.'

Shilada said, 'Oh Sages! Why didn't you bless my son with a long life?'

The sages replied, 'We couldn't. Your son is going to die when he is eight years old. That is written in his stars/destiny.'

Shilada was crestfallen when he heard this bad news, but Nandi consoled his father. He promised his father that he would do something so that this fate would have to be rewritten. He would pray to Shiva, and when he met the Lord some day he would ask of him a boon.

Shilada was not amused, and he expressed his doubts aloud—'Meeting Shiva! Oh, it's not that easy. I had to meditate for a thousand years before I could get to meet Shiva. How do you expect to meet Shiva in the one year that is left to you?'

Nandi was unfazed, and he said with confidence—'Wait and see father. Shiva is difficult to meet if you only perform Tapa or thirst for knowledge. The secret of meeting him quickly lies in having faith and devotion. I will manage; don't worry.'

There is a river named Bhuvana. Nandi entered this river and began underwater prayers to Shiva. His efforts pleased Shiva so much that Shiva appeared before him.

'What boon do you want?' asked Shiva.

'Please grant me the boon that I may be devoted to you,' Nandi replied. 'I don't want that I after taking birth I should become old and die.'

Shiva granted Nandi the boon that he and his father would get to live in Shiva's divine abode in the heaven, known as the Shiva-loka.

Shiva's companions are known as 'Ganas'. Shiva made Nandi the chief of these Ganas, i.e. the 'Gana-pati', the Lord of Shiva's attendants. Nandi thereafter remained a perpetual companion of Shiva for all time to come.

Shiva also gave Nandi a wonderful garland to wear. As soon as he put this garland on, Nandi became resplendent with three eyes and ten hands.

2.35 Units of Time measurement—

The smallest unit of time is known as 'Nimesha'. This is the amount of time it takes to blink. Fifteen Nimeshas make one 'Kashtha', and thirty Kashthas are one 'Kala'. Thirty Kalas make one 'Muhurta', and thirty Muhurtas are 'One Day'. Thirty days are 'One Month'. Each month is divided into 'two lunar fortnights'—viz. the 'Shukla-paksha' (bright lunar fortnight) and the 'Krishna-paksha' (dark lunar fortnight). Six months are called an 'Ayana'. There are thus two Ayanas in a year.

Three hundred and sixty human years are equivalent to one year for the Gods.

The lengths of the four 'Yugas' (eras) are defined in terms of the years of the Gods, not in terms of human years. There are four eras and their names are respectively Sata-yuga or Kritayuga, Tretayuga, Dvaparayuga and Kaliyuga.

The Satyayuga lasts for four thousand divine years; the Tretayuga for three thousand divine years; the Dvaparayuga for two thousand divine years; and the Kaliyuga for one thousand divine years. This adds up to ten thousand divine years.

The 'Sandhyas' and 'Sandhyamshas' are the intervening periods between the Yugas, and these add up to two thousand divine years.

Thus, the four Yugas taken together last for twelve thousand divine years.

In a 'Kalpa' (cycle), each of the four Yugas occurs a thousand times. A Kalpa has fourteen 'Manvantaras' (eras). In a Manvantara, each of the four Yugas thus occurs seventy one times.

One Kalpa corresponds to one day for Brahma. One thousand Kalpas are one of Brahma's years. Eight thousand of Brahma's years make one of Brahma's Yugas. One thousand such Yugas make up one 'Savana', and Brahma lives for three thousand Savanas'. This period is known as a 'Trivrita'.

During each of Vishnu's days, one Brahma is born and dies. And during each of Shiva's days, one Vishnu is born and dies.

[Note—Lifetime/Life-span of Brahma, Vishnu, Viraat Purush, Adi-Viraat, and Adi-Narayan—The *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition describes the one lifetime or life-span of Brahma (the creator) in its Canto 3, paragraph no. 8; of Vishnu in Canto 3, paragraph no. 10-11; of the Viraat Purush (or Adi-Viraat) in Canto 3, paragraph no. 12-13; and of Narayan (parent of Viraat Purush) in its Canto 3, paragraph no. 14-15.

Now let us see what they are according to this Upanishad.

(a) *Brahma*—Canto 3, paragraph no. 8 = 'One day-time of Brahma (the creator) consists of one thousand cycles of creation and destruction, with each cycle consisting of the 4-Yug period according to the Hindu tradition.

One night of Brahma has the same duration as his daytime.

Therefore, the complete 'day' of Brahma as we humans understand this term to mean (i.e. one full cycle of day-time + night-time) would be equal to the total time taken for one day-time and one night-time according to Brahma's measurement of time at the cosmic level.

During this one day of Brahma, the world known as the Satya Loka (the truthful heaven where Brahma and the other senior Gods such as Vishnu live) is created and destroyed once. [That is, one cycle of creation and destruction of heaven would be equal to one thousand such cycles on earth where mortal creatures live.]

With this cosmic scale of measuring time, fifteen such days of Brahma would be his one 'Paksha' or fortnight.

Two such fortnights would be Brahma's one month.

Two such months would be Brahma's one season.

Three such seasons would be one solstice in the year of Brahma.

Two such solstices (i.e. the summer and the winter solstices) would make up one year of Brahma.

According to this celestial measurement of time, Brahma's one life consists of one hundred such years.

This is said to be one life-span of Brahma the creator (8)."

(b) *Vishnu*—Canto 3, paragraph no. 10-11 =

Paragraph no. 10 = One day-time and one night-time of Lord Vishnu, who is the protector, nourisher and sustainer of the cosmic egg or the 'Anda' (i.e. the entire Universe) created out of a fraction ('genes' or 'sperm') of the Supreme Being known as

Adi-Narayan (or the supreme Brahm), is equivalent to one life-time (or life-span) and one sleeping time (or the 'Pralaya' time) of Brahma the creator respectively. That is, one full 'day' in the life of Vishnu is equivalent in length and duration to one cosmic cycle of birth and dissolution of Brahma the creator of this physical world. [One full 'day' of Vishnu implies both the waking phase and the sleeping phase of Vishnu just like our human days are measured which includes the day time when there is sunlight and the ordinary man is usually awake, and the night time when there is darkness in the absence of sunlight. The 'life-span of Brahma' and the 'duration of Pralaya' have been narrated in paragraph no. 9 above. This means that one hundred years in the life of Brahma is equal to one day-time of Lord Vishnu when he is awake, and one hundred such long years of Pralaya when Brahma, in his subtle form as the Hiranyagarbha, rests in the causal body of Brahm, is equal to one night-time of Vishnu when he retires. Therefore, one full 'day' of Lord Vishnu = one full cycle of creation done by Brahma, starting from his current birth, ending in his dissolution, and extending to the point of time just prior to his re-birth in the next phase of creation.]

With this scale of measurement, Lord Vishnu's fortnights, months, seasons, solstices and years are measured.

Hence, one full life-span Vishnu consists of one hundred crore years measured according to this cosmic scale of time that relates to Vishnu as narrated above. [1 Crore = 10 million units. In other words, one life-span of Vishnu = 100 x 10 million years according to the measurement of time on Vishnu's scale.] (10).

Paragraph no. 11 = At the end of his life-span, Vishnu reverts back into his primary form as the Viraat Purush. This marks the 'end' or the dissolution of Vishnu.

When this comes to happen, the universe ends along with all its different formations and layers. This eventuality when the universe dissolves into nothing is the primary form of Vishnu as the Viraat Purush. It marks the beginning of the great Pralaya or dooms-day of the universe, or the resting phase or the sleeping phase of Vishnu¹.

The resting or sleeping period of Vishnu is of the same duration as his life-span. This is the great 'Pralaya of Vishnu' when everything comes to a naught, when there is complete stillness and inactivity, when nothing exists and moves, when nothing shows signs of life and activity. [The 'resting or sleeping time of Vishnu' is when the Lord rests or sleeps peacefully, and depicted in the Purans as the Viraat Purush reclining on the bedstead made of the coiled body of the celestial serpent known as Seshnath who floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as the Kshir-sagar, and which corresponds to the dissolution of creation at the cosmic level or the circle or plane in which Vishnu resides in the broader perspective of the entire creation. This period is equivalent to one crore years also. This concept of measurement is explained in paragraph 10.] (11).

{¹The ordinary waking phase of Vishnu represents the Jagrat or waking state of consciousness. It is during this phase that a creature (a living being) gets actively aware and involved in the gross external world.

On the other hand, the ordinary sleeping phase of Vishnu marks the Swapna or the dreaming state as well as the Sushupta or the deep-sleep state of consciousness when the sleeping creature is neither aware of the outside world nor does he get involved in this external world for the simple reason that his gross body and its sense organs are totally inactive during this state.

This phase leads to the next higher state known as the Turiya state, or the transcendental state of consciousness. This is of a much longer duration than the Sushupta state, and is a perpetual state of bliss when nothing matters. It is during this state that self-realised ascetics find Samadhi, which is a state of trance. While the Sushupta is only momentary and transient because sooner than later the consciousness reverts back to the dreaming and the waking states, the Turiya state is more steady and long-lasting. Once this state is reached, there is no reversal. This is equivalent to the 'Pralaya of Vishnu' which means that the existence of the gross aspect of creation has been completely done away with.

It must be kept in mind that Vishnu represents that aspect of creation that has already taken birth or already has come into being after it was created by Brahma, the creator, and till the time it is concluded by Shiva or Rudra as its concluder. The entire living world passes through these phases—it sleeps for a certain time and keeps awake for certain duration of time. This rhythm of ordinary humdrum life is represented by Vishnu. An ordinary creature remains involved neck-deep in the affairs of the world around him. He takes care of his possessions and his subjects, desires to possess more and still more, and devise better ways to improve his own living as well as those dependent upon him. He protects his own assets and his body to the best of his abilities. All efforts of his are directed towards attaining happiness, deriving joy and pleasures from his surroundings, and generally taking care of his all-round well-being. This is obviously the role of Vishnu as the caretaker, the sustainer and the protector of creation.

However, there are some rare people who realise the futility of this wild-goose chase, and having had the opportunity to study the Upanishads and other scriptures they realise that true happiness and bliss lies somewhere else, that this world is perishable and therefore the joys and happiness that it provides are also transient. So they decide for themselves to pursue the source of eternal and truthful happiness and joy, which they find in realisation of the truth about themselves, and about the 'pure consciousness' that forms their true 'self'. With this realisation they taste the eternal source of Amrit or nectar that they prefer to remain submerged in its ecstasy and keep suckling it. Then they would have nothing to do with this gross external world.

Therefore, for all practical purposes this world has come to a naught for them, it has ceased to exist, it has dissolved. This is equivalent to the 'Pralaya' or the end of the world for them. Since the living being is an image of Vishnu in his form as the Viraat Purush, it follows that this is also equivalent to the 'Pralaya of Vishnu' when the world dissolves around him. A lot of imagery and metaphors are used to explain these grand philosophies of the Upanishads.}"

(c) *Viraat Purush or Adi-Viraat*—Canto 3, paragraph nos. 12-13 =

Paragraph no. 12 = The one life time and one Pralaya time of Vishnu (i.e. one full life cycle of Vishnu) is equivalent to one day-time and one night-time of the 'Adi-Viraat Purush'. [The word 'Adi' means one that was present at the beginning; the primary and the original entity from which the present has come into being. Hence, the term 'Adi-Viraat' would refer to the higher and subtler form of the Viraat Purush from whom Vishnu has been born or created during the very primary stages of evolution of creation. Vishnu is the grosser aspect or the revealed form of the Viraat Purush. Vishnu represents that aspect or quality or dynamism or power of the Supreme Being which helps to sustain, nourish and protect the creation, including the creator Brahma himself. Applying the logic used for Brahma the creator while describing the process of creation and dissolution, it follows that Lord Vishnu, who is more often than not treated as being synonymous with the Viraat Purush, is like Brahma the creator in the higher echelons of

creation. Vishnu is the Brahma of the third layer of the cosmic matrix, the third circle of creation called the Vishnu Loka. The first circle is the mortal world where ordinary creatures live—it is called the Bhu Loka. The second circle is the world where Brahma lives—called the ‘Brahma Loka’.

The ‘Adi-Viraat’ is the subtler and more sublime form of the Viraat Purush from whom this universe in which we live is created. The ‘Adi-Viraat’ is the form of the Supreme Being that is referred to in Canto 2, paragraph 11 which says that millions of universes are born from each pore of the body of the Viraat. This creation has been visualised as being in different layers like many concentric circles, one higher than its previous one. This concept will be further discussed in Canto 6.]

Hence, one ‘full day’ in the entire life-span of the Adi-Viraat Purush would obviously consist of one life cycle of Vishnu as stated above. [One ‘full day’ implies a complete circle of one sunlight time and one night time according to our earth terminology. In cosmic terms it implies one full life-span of Vishnu and one full Pralaya of Vishnu as narrated in previous paragraph nos. 10-11.]

With this cosmic scale of measurement of time, the fortnights, months, seasons, solstices and years of the ‘Adi-Viraat’ are measured.

Therefore, one life-span of the Adi-Viraat Purush is equivalent to one hundred crore years measured according to this cosmic scale of time that relates to the Adi-Viraat as narrated above. [1 Crore = 10 million units. In other words, one life-span of the Adi-Viraat = 100 x 10 million years according to the measurement of time on Adi-Viraat’s scale.] (12).

Paragraph no. 13 = At the end of his life-span, the Adi-Viraat Purush withdraws himself into his primary form known as the ‘Adi-Narayan’, who is adorned by the Maha Maya and is the primary cause of the Adi-Viraat’s existence.

That is, at the end of his life-span, the Adi-Viraat dissolves into the Adi-Narayan, the supreme Brahm, from whom the former had been born, or who was the primary cause of the former’s coming into being.

[The Adi-Narayan would be the fourth concentric circle, the higher echelon of creation. He is the more subtle form of the Supreme Being that transcends the Adi-Viraat form. It would be noted that the differences between all these cosmic entities is very fine and subtle. It can be illustrated with an ordinary example. The air element is the same within the earth’s atmosphere, but the density of air near the earth’s surface is obviously more than the highest point of the atmosphere. Even the percentage or density of the various gases and other ingredients of air vary at different levels. Hence, as we move up and away from the surface of the earth, the ingredients of the air and the characteristics of the space around the earth change, but primarily they will always remain the air and the sky elements, retaining their intrinsic qualities and virtues. Likewise, the same Supreme Being known as Brahm exists throughout this creation in all its different levels, and this Brahm exhibits different sets of characteristics at each level. It is only the degree of grossness and subtlety that changes, and not the primary nature of Brahm. The fact that Brahm appears to change miraculously and exhibit different characteristics at different points of time and dimensions of creation which are much divergent and not related to the original characters of Brahm as outlined in this Upanishad is an evident form of the

stupendous ability of the Supreme Being to create delusions. And this is called 'Maha Maya'—or, the Great Delusion.]

The time during which the Adi-Viraat remains at rest or dissolved is called the period of Pralaya of Adi-Viraat and the dissolution of the level of creation which is associated with him. This period is equivalent to the one life-span of the Adi-Viraat (as outlined in paragraph no. 12 above). [That is, the duration of the period of Pralaya of the Adi-Viraat, or the time when he sleeps or lies in rest, which is equal to the period of his one life-span, would be another one hundred crore years or a 100 million years.]

During this phase of Pralaya of the Adi-Viraat, everything comes to a naught; there is absolute stillness and no activity whatsoever.

[Therefore, one full cycle of existence and dissolution of the cosmos at the level of the Adi-Viraat Purush, which is higher than that related to Vishnu, would consist of one full life-span and one full length of Pralaya or resting phase of the Adi-Viraat.] (13)."

(d) *Adi-Narayan*—Canto 3, paragraph nos. 14-15 =

Paragraph no. 14 = The one day-time of the parent Adi-Narayan, the Primal Purush, is equivalent to one full life-span of the off spring known as the Adi-Viraat. Similarly, one night-time of Adi-Narayan is equivalent to one period of Pralaya of Adi-Viraat. [The 'Adi-Narayan' is the fifth level of creation in the order of increasing subtlety and sublimity.]

Hence, one 'full day' in the life of the Adi-Narayan consists of one such day-time and one such night-time as measured according to the cosmic scale of Adi-Narayan.

Extended further, his fortnight, month, season, solstice and one year is also measured with this cosmic time scale.

Thus, one full life-span of the Adi-Narayan is equivalent to one hundred crore such years as measured according to the scale of cosmic time that is applicable to the Adi-Narayan (14).

Paragraph no. 15 = At the end of this tenure, the Adi-Narayan goes to sleep or takes rest by closing his eyes as per the wishes of the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan¹. This is called the 'Nimesh' of the Adi-Narayan, or the time during which the Lord's eyes are closed.

[The subtle world of Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan is the 6th level of creation of the cosmic matrix. The sequence is as follows—1st level is the world mortal creature, called 'Bhu Loka', the 2nd level is of Brahma, the creator, called the 'Brahma Loka', the 3rd level is that of Vishnu, the sustainer and caretaker, and his world known as the 'Vishnu Loka', the 4th level is of the Adi-Viraat, the parent of the Viraat Purush who is also known as Vishnu, the 5th level is Adi-Narayan, and finally the 6th level or circle of creation is represented by the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan. In other words, this creation is visualised as consisting of concentric rings, with the 'Bhu Loka' being the inner-most ring, and the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan as the outer-most ring.]

When this happens, the Mool Avidya and the accompanying Anda with all its various layers dissolve into nothing; their existence comes to an end. This is called the Pralaya of creation at the level of Adi-Narayan. [The universe is visualised as an egg that harbours creation at varying levels of subtlety and development. In order to understand the process of dissolution or regression or withdrawal one must know the process of progression or growth and expansion of the entity that regresses or withdraws into itself.

The process of forward motion or evolution of creation has already been described in Canto 2, paragraph nos. 9-12 of this present Upanishad.] (15).

{¹The meaning as to who is the great and the senior God known as Maha Narayan would now become clear. All the divine entities mentioned till now—viz. the mortal world of living beings, Brahma, Vishnu, Adi-Viraat and Adi-Narayan are only one Paad or aspect of the Supreme Being known as ‘Maha Narayan’—the Great Narayan or the Great Lord God. This Maha Narayan is the outer boundary of creation of which we are aware, enclosing everything from the outside. These five worlds represent only ‘one’ aspect or Paad or foot of the Great Lord known as the supreme transcendental ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being.

This Brahm is known to have ‘four’ Paads, hence the rest of the existence that has an extremely subtle and sublime form would logically represent the rest of the combined ‘three’ Paads of Brahm. These are represented by the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan—literally meaning the Great Narayan with the divine glories that are representative of his three aspects (‘Tri Paad’) other than the ones already described in this Canto till now. The Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan is just like the moat that surrounds a grand huge fort. A better imagery would be to visualise this known creation with its limited span as a huge continent, and the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan as the vast and fathomless ocean surrounding this continent. The fact of the matter is that even in actual practice, the land mass of earth is approximately only one-fourth of the total area of the earth, with the rest three-fourths covered with water, be it in the form of an ocean, a sea or a river. This picture would help to explain the further subdivisions of the subtler aspect of creation as narrated in the forthcoming paragraph no. 16.

Who essentially is this ‘Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan’ has been beautifully explained in Canto 4, paragraph nos. 2-6 of this Upanishad.

One can well imagine the stupendity of Brahm if only of its feet is so grand that it covers the entire gamut of creation as we know and even can imagine about.]

The 4 ‘Paads’, or limbs, legs, aspects, facets or pedestals of Brahm—The four ‘Paads’ of Brahm are the four legs upon which Brahm stands. These four Paads symbolically establish the greatness and supremacy of Brahm as the all-powerful and all-controlling Authority in this creation. Since Brahm is the supreme Divinity that has revealed itself in the form of this creation, since each and every unit of creation is a manifestation of Brahm and without Brahm nothing exists, nothing has any relevance and truth (refer *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph 1), it follows that the entire creation represents Brahm’s four cosmic forms or aspects or facets—which are called the four legs or Paads of Brahm. This is a metaphoric way of saying that the supreme Brahm has manifested himself and is made known to this world by the means of these four mediums.

The four Paads of Brahm stand for the four states of existence of consciousness—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or dreaming state, the Sushupta or deep sleep state, and the Turiya or transcendental state. This fact is affirmed in the Atharva Veda’s *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph 5; Canto 4, paragraphs 1-3.

These four Paads of Brahm have been explained in (i) Sam Veda’s *Chandogya Upanishad*, Canto 3, section 18, verse nos. 2-6, Canto 4, Section 5, verse no. 2, Canto 4, Section 6, verse no. 3, Canto 4, Section 7, verse no. 3, and Canto 4, Section 8, verse no. 3. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 1. (iii) Atharva Veda’s *Mandukya Upanishad*, verse nos. 3-7; *Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 4-7; *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph 5; Canto 4, paragraph nos. 2-3, 6; Canto 8, paragraph no. 4; *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 5-8; *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 5; *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 8, verse nos. 9-19.}”

2.36 Daksha Yagya (the fire sacrifice performed by Daksha Prajaapti)—

The sages said, ‘Romaharshan, you have not told us the story of the quarrel between Daksha and Shiva which led to Sati’s death. You have only mentioned it in passing. Tell us the story now.’

Romaharshan began to narrate this fascinating story for them.

Daksha’s daughter Sati was married to Shiva. One day, the Gods, the demons and the sages went to visit Shiva and Sati in the Himalayas. Daksha accompanied the other Gods on this visit. When the Gods arrived, Shiva was seated and did not get up. He showed no special honour to Daksha because Daksha happened to be his father-in-law. Daksha interpreted this as a sign of disrespect. He felt insulted.

Subsequently, Daksha arranged for a yajna and sent invitations to all his other sons-in-law and their wives. He did not invite Shiva or Sati. But Sati heard about the sacrifice and resolved that she would attend it, invitation or no invitation. In a beautiful Viman (space vehicle), Sati traveled to her father’s house.

Daksha was not at all pleased to see Sati. In fact, he ignored her completely and devoted all his attention to his other daughters. When Sati wished to know the reason for this, Daksha told her that this was because of her husband, who happened to be a worthless fellow and did not deserve any respect. Hearing this, Sati gave up her life.

The mountain Himalaya had prayed that Sati might be born as his daughter. Sati was born as his daughter Parvati and married Shiva again. This story you already know.

Several years later, Daksha resolved to hold an Ashvamedha Yagya (horse sacrifice) in the Himalayas. The Gods and the sages were all invited to this sacrifice, but Shiva was not invited. The sage Dadhichi did not like this slight to Shiva and he boycotted the yajna in protest.

Parvati heard about this sacrifice and she began to incite Shiva to do something. Shiva created a being named Virabhadhra. Virabhadhra shone with energy and he had thousands of mouths and eyes. His hair glistened like lighting and his hands were full of all sorts of weapons. When he spoke, it was like thunder. From his body, Virabhadra created a female demon named Bhadrakali.

Virabhadra and Bhadrakali asked Shiva, ‘What are our orders?’

Shiva ordered them—‘Go and destroy Daksha’s Yagya on my orders.’

To carry out Shiva’s orders and to help themselves in this endeavour, Virabhadra created several other demons from parts of his body. All of them had a thousand arms and carried weapons.

Virabhadra, Bhadrakali and these other demons headed for Daksha’s sacrifice. When they got there, they found that the sacrifice had already started and the sacred fire was burning. The sages were reciting hymns and the Gods were watching. Musical instruments were being played. Virabhadra roared and the sound of the roar was so terrible that several of the Gods began to run away. The earth shook with the sound of the roar. There were tidal waves in the ocean.

Daksha was frightened. But he summoned up courage and asked, ‘Who are you and why have you come here?’

Virabhadra replied, ‘We are Shiva’s servants, and we have come to take part in the sacrifice.’

Virabhadra and the other demons then proceeded to burn down the structure where the sacrifice was being held. They tied up the priests and threw all the offerings away. With their weapons, they attacked the Gods. Whatever resistance the Gods tried to put up was taken care of by Virabhadra's trident and Bhadrakali's spear. The goddess Sarasvati lost her nose and the Agni-God (Fire-God) lost his arms. The sage Bhaga had his eyes gouged out and the sage Pusha lost all his teeth. Virabhadra sliced off Daksha's head and gave it to Bhadrakali, who proceeded to kick it around as one kicks a football.

Thousands and thousands of Gods died and the sacrifice became a battle-field. Vishnu tried to fight it out, and he and Virabhadra shot arrows at each other in a fierce one-to-one duel.

One of Virabhadra's arrows struck Vishnu on the chest and he fell down unconscious. Motivated by Brahma, the Gods began to pray to Shiva. These prayers pacified Shiva and he asked Virabhadra and Bhadrakali to refrain from causing any further damage.

Brahma asked, 'What about the Gods who have been killed? Please bring them back to life.'

Since Shiva's anger had been appeased, he restored life to the dead Gods. Those who had lost parts of their anatomy got them back again. But what was to be done about Daksha? His head could not be found. A goat's head was therefore stuck onto Daksha's body. Thus restored to life, Daksha begged forgiveness from Shiva. [This is one of the reasons why a goat is sacrificed to please Shiva during occult forms of ancient worship that require animal sacrifices, though this practice is out of date now and regarded as primitive and obsolete.]

{Note—This story of Daksha Prajapati's fire sacrifice and how it was destroyed has been narrated in full in the epic Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 60—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 65.}

2.37 Parvati Becomes Gauri—

There were two demons named Shumbha and Nishumbha. They meditated a lot and pleased Brahma. Brahma thereupon gave them the boon that they could not be killed by males. Having obtained the boon, the two demons started to oppress the world. They drove the Gods out of heaven and the Gods went to Brahma so that a solution might be found to the problem.

Brahma went to Shiva and said, 'You have to help the Gods. I have given Shumbha and Nishumbha the boon that they cannot be killed by males. Find a way so that a female is born out of Parvati's body. She will kill Shumbha and Nishumbha.'

Shiva assured him that he will try.

When Shiva next met Parvati, he addressed her as 'Kali', the 'black one'. This angered Parvati, since 'Kali' means black or dark.

Sternly rebuking Shiva, she retorted, 'Then why did you marry me if you thought I was so dark-skinned? Why do you pretend to love me when you pass such insulting comments about the colour of my skin; is it fair? Cursed is the woman who is not loved by her husband. I am going to perform Tapa so that I may become fair. I am going to pray to Brahma.'

Parvati went off to meditate. She meditated for many years. There was a tiger which saw Parvati meditating. It was not a good tiger at all, but an evil one. It thought that Parvati would provide a good meal. It sat down in the front of Parvati to appreciate for a while the treat that was in store for it. Parvati did not realize that the tiger was planning to eat her. She thought that it had sat down in front of her because it wanted to protect her from other wild beasts. She thought that the tiger was one of her devotees and she therefore entered the tiger's soul. As soon as she did this, all thoughts vanished from the tiger's mind. Now it was indeed one of her devotees.

Meanwhile, Brahma arrived to find out who Parvati was meditating. Parvati said that she wanted to become Gauri, that is, someone who was fair. She was sick and tired of being addressed as kali. Brahma granted the boon.

Parvati shed off all the dark cells (kosha) from her body became Gauri—the 'fair one'. From the cells emerged a dark-hued goddess named Koushiki. Parvati handed over Koushiki to Brahma. Endowed with weapons by Brahma, Koushiki killed Shumbha and Nishumbha. Parvati returned to her husband as Gouri.

What happened to the tiger? Shiva turned him into a man, and he was employed by Nandi as one of Shiva's guards. He was named 'Somanandi'—the dark coloured Nandi.

2.38 Upamanyu/Up-manyu—

The sage Vyaghrapada had a son named Upamanyu. When he was small, he wanted some milk from his mother. But he was not at all happy with the milk that his mother gave him. He complained that it did not taste like milk at all.

His mother said, 'Naturally, I did not give you milk. How can we afford milk? We are not rich. I powdered some rice and mixed it with water. That is what I gave to you as milk. Unfortunately, you have tasted milk in your uncle's house and you could make out the difference.'

Upamanyu's mother began to cry. But Upamanyu consoled his mother, saying 'Mother, don't cry please. I will pray to Shiva and get milk for myself.'

His mother taught him the Mantra that was to be used for praying to Shiva. She also taught him another mantra which would summon up a terrible divine weapon named Aghorastra. This was just in case there was any danger.

Upamanyu went to the Himalayas and started to meditate. He lived only on air and chanted the Mantras that his mother had taught him. He prayed in front of an earthen Linga. Demons came to disturb his meditation, but Upamanyu paid no attention to them.

Shiva himself was impressed by Upamanyu's difficult Tapa. But he thought that he would first test Upamanyu. So he arrived in front of Upamanyu in the disguise of Indra and asked, 'Upamanyu, what are you doing?'

Upamanyu replied, 'I am blessed that the king of the Gods has arrived before me. I am praying to Shiva.'

Shiva disguised as Indra tried to provoke him, and so he ridiculed Upamanyu and said, 'Why pray to that useless fellow Shiva?'

Upamanyu could not stand this insult for Shiva. He summoned up the weapon Aghorastra by means of the mantra and let it loose at the person he thought was Indra.

Shiva then manifested himself in his own form and aghorastra was repelled by Nadi, who had also turned up.

Shiva himself taught Upamanyu all sorts of sacred knowledge, and arrangements were made so that Upamanyu need never suffer from a lack of milk.

Lord Krishna once came to meet the sage Upamanyu, many years after the incident related to the milk. Upamanyu taught Krishna the words of wisdom that he had learnt from Shiva; he also taught Krishna to pray to Shiva. It was by praying to Shiva that Krishna obtained his son Samba. For sixteen months Krishna had to pray before Shiva appeared, to grant the boon regarding the son. Parvati also granted Krishna several boons.

2.39 Andhakaasura, Hiranyanetra and Hiranyakashipu:

The Story of Prahalad—

Shiva was once sitting on Mount Mandara. Paravati came up from behind, so that Shiva could not see her, and covered Shiva's eyes with her two hands. Shiva could not see and everything seemed to be dark to him. Parvati's hands sweated from the exertion and the sweat fell down on the ground. From this sweat, a dark and fierce creature was born and started to roar.

Shiva said, 'Parvati, what are you up to? First, you cover up my eyes so that I can't see. Next, you roar so as to frighten me.'

Parvati replied, 'It's not me; see for yourself. I wonder where this creature has come from.'

She removed her hands and Shiva saw the 'being'/creature in front of them. 'It is our son', Shiva said. 'It was born from your sweat when you covered my eyes. Since it was born when my eyes were in darkness, let it be called 'Andhaka'—the 'blind one'. Andhaka was born blind, as Shiva was effectively blind when Andhaka was born.

There was an Asura (demon) named Hiranyanetra. (In other Purans, this same asura is referred to as Hiranyaksha.) Hiranyanetra had no sons. He therefore began to pray to Shiva so that he might have a son. Shiva told Hiranyanetra that it was impossible for him to have a son. However, if he so desired, he could have their son Andhaka and bring him up as his own son.

Hiranyanetra gladly agreed to this.

Hiranyanetra was very strong and powerful. He conquered the three worlds and drove the Gods out of heaven. He even took the earth down to the underworld. In desperation, the Gods prayed to Vishnu for deliverance.

Vishnu adopted the form of a boar (varaha) and went down to the underworld in search of Hiranyanetra. When he found the asura, he killed him with his Sudarshan Chakra. He also killed several other asuras with his boar's tusks. Then he lifted up the earth with his tusks and replaced it where it should be.

So far as Hiranyanetra's kingdom was concerned, Vishnu crowned Andhaka king there.

Hiranyanetra had a brother named Hiranyakashipu. This brother prayed to Brahma and obtained a boon that made him virtually impossible to kill. Armed with this boon, Hiranyakashipu conquered the three worlds and drove the Gods out of heaven. The Gods again started to pray to Vishnu for deliverance.

Vishnu adopted the form of a lion and entered Hiranyakashipu's capital. The lion had a huge mane and sharp teeth and claws. The lion killed several asuras and this news was brought to Hiranyakashipu. He decided to kill the lion. Hiranyakashipu had several sons, one of whom was named Prahlada. Prahlada alone thought that there was something fishy about the lion and about the way it had suddenly appeared. He thought that the lion might very well be Vishnu in disguise.

Prahlada therefore tried to dissuade his father from fighting the lion. He first asked some of his soldiers to capture the lion, but they were all killed. Hiranyakashipu then himself attacked the lion with all sorts of weapons. But all the weapons were exhausted and the demon could do the lion no harm.

Finally, the lion grasped Hiranyakashipu and tore the asura's heart out with its claws. This was the narasimha (half-man, half-lion) incarnation of Vishnu.

Having killed Hiranyakashipu, Vishnu crowned Prahlada as the king of the kingdom.

Meanwhile, Andhaka had been crowned king in Hiranyanetra's kingdom. Prahlada and Andhaka's other cousins went to him and said, 'You are blind. What are you going to do with a kingdom? Give it to us. Our uncle made a mistake in accepting a blind son from Shiva.'

Andhaka was very hurt at these nasty words. He went away to the forest and started to perform Tapa. He prayed to Brahma. For millions of years he stood on one leg, with his arms raised high, and prayed. No one since that day has been able to duplicate Andhaka's wonderful feat of meditation. He did not eat or drink at all. He chopped off parts of his body and offered it to the sacrificial fire. It came to such a pass that there was no more meat or blood left in his body. It had all been offered to the fire. He was just a skeleton.

It was then that Brahma appeared before him and offered a boon.

Andhaka said, 'Prahlada and my other cousins have taken over my kingdom. Please grant me the boon that I may be able to see. Please also grant me the boon that I may not be killed by Gods, demons, or humans, or even by the great Vishnu himself.'

Brahma was in a fix. Earlier, many demons had asked for similar boons, but they had generally not mentioned Vishnu, so that when the need arose, Vishnu had been able to kill them. But here was an Asura/demon who was asking for the boon that even Vishnu would not be able to kill him. This would make him virtually immortal.

So, Brahma told him—'Listen, everything that you have asked for is possible, but all beings have to die. Indicate the circumstances under which you will die and the boons will be granted.'

Andhaka replied, 'Since I have to die then let it be under the following conditions: if I ever wish to marry a beautiful woman who is like a mother to me, then let that be the hour appointed for my death.'

This condition was better than nothing at all, and so Brahma granted Andhaka the boon.

Andhaka returned to his kingdom. When Prahlada and the other cousins learnt that Andhaka had become so powerful because of the boons, they not only returned to him his own kingdom but also the kingdoms that were theirs. Remember that Andhaka could now see.

The first thing that Andhaka did was to invade heaven. He defeated Indra and the other Gods and made them pay taxes to the demons. Next he defeated the snakes (Nagas), the Gandharvas, the Rakshasas, the Yakshas (companions of Kubera) and the humans. Thus he began to rule over all the three worlds.

For millions of years Andhaka ruled in this fashion. The religion of the Vedas suffered during this period, since Andhaka paid no attention to it.

Once, Andhaka went for a visit to Mount Mandara. The place was so beautiful that he made up his mind to live there. Three of Andhaka's generals were named Duryodhan, Vighasa and Hasti. These three were exploring the environment of Mount Mandara when they came upon a cave. An ascetic was meditating inside the cave. He was dressed in the skin of a tiger, wore a garland of skulls, his hair was matted and he wore a crescent moon on his forehead. There was a beautiful woman near the ascetic. She was more beautiful than any other woman in the three worlds. The three generals concluded that this was the right wife for Andhaka.

When the generals came back to Andhaka and reported on what they had seen, the demon king said, 'What are you waiting for? Go to the ascetic and ask him for the woman.'

Duryodhan, Vighasa and Hasti went back to the ascetic. They said, 'You are only an ascetic. You don't deserve such a pretty wife. Our master is the lord of everything and he is immensely rich. He is also handsome because of a boon received from Brahma. Give us this woman so that our master Andhaka may marry her.'

That ascetic was none else but Shiva doing meditation, and the beautiful woman was his divine consort Parvati.

Presently, the ascetic told these generals, 'Ask your master to come and take the woman himself.'

As soon as he heard this, Andhaka grasped his sword and came to fight with Shiva. The door to the cave was guarded by Nandi, and Andhaka first had to fight with him. Nandi easily defeated the asura and also defeated the asura soldiers who had accompanied their king. But Andhaka returned and again a fight raged with Nandi for five hundred years. Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and the other Gods also came to help in the fight with the demons.

The general Vighasa was a very strong warrior. He opened his mouth wide and swallowed up all the Gods, including Vishnu. So far, Shiva himself had not played any part in the fighting. But hearing what Vighasa had done, he ascended his bull and came out to fight. He killed Vighasa and rescued the Gods from the asura's stomach.

The demons had a Guru (preceptor) named Shukracharya who knew the art of bringing back dead creatures to life. So Shukracharya moved around the battle-field, bringing back to life any demons that were killed. This was not helping the cause of the Gods at all. Shiva's companions (Ganas) captured Shukracharya and brought him to Shiva. Shiva promptly swallowed up Shukracharya.

Soon all the demons were taken care of, with the exception of Andhaka. He continued to fight. Vishnu's mace could do him no harm and he only laughed at Indra's arrows. Some of the arrows did pierce the asura's body. But whenever drops of blood from his body fell onto the ground, new demons or Asuras who were exactly like him in appearance were created from this blood. As a result, the battle-field was soon populated with thousands and thousands of Andhakas.

Shiva created a goddess known as Devi from his own body. Devi was appointed the task of drinking up the blood of the asuras before it could spill onto the ground. Thus aided by Devi, Shiva started to tackle the demons and soon there was only the original Andhaka left. Shiva flung a trident at him. The trident struck Andhaka on the chest and the Asura king fell down dead. When the war was over, Shukracharya prayed to Shiva and was released from Shiva's stomach.

2.40 Ruru—

There was another demon who wanted to marry Parvati as well. His name was Ruru. He happened to see Parvati and decided that this was the woman who would be his wife. He began to perform Tapa so that his desire might be satisfied.

Brahma appeared before him and asked, 'Ruru, why are you performing such difficult Tapa? Can I offer you a boon?'

'I want to become immortal', said the demon.

Brahma replied, 'That is a boon that not even I can grant you.'

Brahma departed and Ruru continued with his meditation. This meditation was going on in a mountain named Malaya. And such was the power of Ruru's meditation that the mountain started to burn. The fires were so strong that even Shiva and Parvati had to run away from the mountain.

Parvati asked, 'Lord, why are we running away? Why don't you do something about the fire?'

Shiva answered, 'I can't. This fire is on account of Ruru's Tapa and he is performing this Tapa so as to marry you. It is up to you to do something about Ruru.'

Parvati decided that she would indeed do something. While they were talking, they saw a lion fighting with an elephant. Parvati slew the lion and skinned it. She wore the lion's hide as her clothing. Her hair became smeared with the lion's blood. Her appearance became terrible.

With a thunderous roar, Parvati went to where Ruru was. She said, 'Ruru, I have come. I am Parvati. I am the one you have been praying for. Now stop meditating.'

Ruru rebuked her, 'Rubbish. Parvati is beautiful. Her face is like the moon, her hue is golden, and her arms are like lotus stems. Just look at yourself. Your looks are terrible. You can't be Parvati. You are lying. Go away, I don't want you.'

Saying this, Ruru struck Parvati with a mace. Parvati was angry at this and she hit Ruru with her fists. The two fought, with Ruru flinging boulders and trees at the goddess, and Parvati using her nails and her teeth to get at the demon. Ruru created several other Asuras/demons from his body. In retaliation, Parvati created many goddesses known as 'Shaktis' from her own body. The Shaktis began to eat up the demons.

Ruru fled, but Parvati pursued him to the ends of the earth. He fled to heaven. Parvati followed him there. He fled to the underworld, but Parvati pursued him there as well. Finally, Ruru could flee no more. Parvati caught hold of him and tore off his head with her nails. She then drank the demon's blood. Parvati also skinned the demon.

Thus it was that Ruru was killed. On her return to Shiva, Parvati gave him the lion's pelt that she had so far been wearing and Shiva donned it. For her own clothing, Parvati put on Ruru's skin.

2.41 A false/illusionary Parvati—

Shiva had once gone on a visit to a city named Shonitapura. He was accompanied by many Gandharvas and Apsaras. Parvati was left behind in Kailash and Shiva felt lonely without her.

He called Nandi and said, 'Go to Kailash and ask Parvati to come here.'

Nandi went to Kailash and told Parvati that Shiva wanted her. Parvati said that this would take a little time, since she wanted to get ready first. Nandi went back and reported to Shiva what Parvati had said. Shiva waited for a little while, but Parvati did not come.

He therefore sent Nandi again to Kailash with the injunction that he should not come back without Parvati.

The Apsaras meanwhile decided that they would play a trick on Shiva. One of them would disguise herself and pretend to be Parvati. An Apsara named Chitrlekha agreed to do this. Another Apsara named Urvashi disguised herself as Nandi. Other Apsaras disguised themselves as companions of Parvati. So good were their disguises that it was impossible to detect them as being false.

The false Nandi then brought the false Parvati to Shiva and said, 'Parvati has come. Her companions, the other goddesses, have also come.'

Shiva was delighted. He was not able to detect that this was a false Parvati. While they were having great fun, the real Parvati, the real Nandi and the real goddesses turned up and there was utter confusion. No one could tell the real ones from the false ones.

Finally the mess was sorted out when the apsaras adopted their real forms. Neither Shiva nor Parvati were angry at this practical joke.

2.42 Another False Parvati—

This is an incident from the time when Parvati went away to do Tapa so as to become fair. Before going away to meditate, she called Nandi to her and said, 'My husband does not know the difference between real Parvatis and false ones. Keep careful guard at the gate and do not let any false Parvatis enter.'

There was an Asura named Adi. He performed Tapa and wanted a boon from Brahma which would make him immortal. Brahma refused to grant him this, but granted him the boon that Adi would be very strong. Happy with this boon, Adi wandered around the Himalayas and discovered Nandi standing guard at the gate to Shiva's palace.

The demon/Asura asked Nandi, 'What are you doing here?'

Nandi reported the conversation that had taken place with Parvati. The demon went away. But he soon returned, this time disguised as Parvati. Lest Nandi not let him pass, he slithered through the gate disguised as a snake. And once inside the palace, he resumed his form of Parvati. He then went to meet Shiva. Shiva did not realize that this was a false Parvati and he came forward to embrace Adi. But no sooner had Shiva embraced him than the Asura adopted his own form and tried to kill Shiva.

The two fought and Shiva killed Adi. But before dying, the asura played another trick. He told Shiva, I have a brother who is stronger than me. He will return here in the form of Parvati and will kill you. This was a blatant lie. Adi had no brother.

The real Parvati returned after finishing her Tapa. But Shiva thought that this was demon disguised as Parvati. He created many creatures from his body so as to kill Parvati. But Parvati also created many creatures from her own body, and they swallowed up the creatures created by Shiva. When this had gone on thousands of times, Shiva realized that this must be the real Parvati. Shiva and Parvati were united. This union between Shiva and the genuine Parvati removed all delusions and henceforth there was no other forms of Parvati, i.e. there were no more 'false Parvatis'.

2.43 The Story of Yama, the God of death—

The sage Sanat-Kumar was Brahma's son. Once he had gone to visit Yama, the God of death. While they were talking with each other, a shining Vimana (aerial vehicle) brought a man to Yama who immediately stood up to honour the guest.

Yama worshipped him and said, 'I am honoured. I hope you had no problems on the way. The Vimana will take you to Brahma's residence in Brahmaloka.'

After this guest had left, another shining Vimana brought another guest who was also worshipped in similar fashion by Yama.

Sanat-Kumar was mystified at this. He asked Yama, 'Who are these two people? I have never heard of Yama worshipping anyone in such glowing terms. These two must be holy men indeed. They must have accumulated a lot of punya. Who are they? Tell me their stories.'

Yama obliged and told this story—

There was a city named Vaidisha. The king who ruled there was named Dharapal. Nandi was cursed by Parvati that he would have to spend twelve years on earth as a jackal. His crime was that, when Parvati had gone to perform Tapa, Nandi had permitted a false Parvati to enter Shiva's palace. Nandi was born as a jackal. The jackal went to the confluence of the rivers Vitasta and Vetravati. There it set up a Linga and prayed before it, going without food and water. After the twelve years passed, the jackal died and adopted a shining form. In this form, Nandi returned to Shiva Loka.

King Dharapala had seen the jackal fasting and praying. He also witnessed its strange death. The king's wonder knew no bounds. He erected a temple in that wonderful place. He brought several Brahmins to the temple and made them recite the Purans there.

When Dharapala died, it was decided that he would go to Brahmaloka because of all this punya. This was the first guest who had come before Yama. Such are the wonderful virtues of worshipping Shiva and the Purans.

Sanat-Kumar asked, 'What about the second guest?'

The second guest used to be evil. He had never donated anything in his life. But he once heard the Paranas being recited and was completely converted. He arranged many recitals of the Purans on his own and donated gold to the reciters.

This auspicious and charitable deed was going to take him to Brahma-loka, the abode of the Brahma, the heaven. Such are the wonderful virtues of hearing and reading the Purans. Doing this is tantamount to worshipping Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

2.44 Shatanika and Shasranika—

In the region named Jambudvipa, there used to rule a king named Shatanika. He was the best among warriors. But he was also very religious. He donated alms and treated his guests well. Every day, the Brahmins received gold and clothes from Shatanika. When Shatanika died, his son Sahasranika became king. Sahasranika also ruled well and righteously. But he did not donate as much of alms to the Brahmins as his father used to.

They took their complaint to the king and said, ‘You do not give as much of alms to us as your father used to. Many Brahmins have already left your kingdom, and so will the others unless you increase the alms you give us.’

Sahasranika replied, ‘I have indeed heard that the donation of alms to Brahmins brings auspicious results known as ‘Punya’. I have also heard that all this punya takes one to heaven after death, until the time one has to be born again. Since my father accumulated all this punya by donating alms to Brahmins, he must be in heaven. You are all learned Brahmins. Why don’t you tell me where my father is right now?’

The Brahmins could not reply. They had no idea where Shatanika was. But later on, they met a learned sage named Bhargav. Bhargav was so powerful that the Brahmins were sure that he would be able to tell where Shatanika was. They begged Bhargav to help them. Bhargav was not very interested in helping the Brahmins. He was busy meditating and had no desire to waste his time on idle pursuits like finding out where dead people now were. But the Brahmins kept begging him and Bhargava eventually agreed.

The Sun God himself led the way and, following him Bhargav went all the way to Yama’s abode. It was a long distance away. The Sun God led Bhargav straight to where the twenty-eight crores of narakas (hells) were. The wailings of sinners who were being tortured could be heard. Before they could go any further, their way was barred by a Brahmin.

The Brahmin said, ‘Bhargav, you owe me a coin for services rendered. You have not paid this and I am dead. Pay me the coin and only then can you proceed further.’

Bhargav replied, ‘I am not carrying any coins on me at present. When I return home, I will collect a coin and bring it back to you. Now let me move forward.’

The Brahmin would not listen, and he rejected the offer—‘Nonsense. This is hell. Here payments are strictly on a cash basis. There is no question of paying up later. Pay or you shall not proceed. If you do not have any coins, why then, pay me one-sixth of all the punya that you have earned through your mediations.’

Bhargav paid what was asked for and edged forward. He was successively stopped by a cowherd, a washerman, a tailor, a priest and a builder. To each of them Bhargava owed some money and they would not let him go until the debts were cleared. In each case, Bhargava parted with one-sixth of his punya so that he was left with none at all.

When these accounts were settled, the Sun God led Bhargav to the hell where Shatanika was. Bhargav was bewildered to find such a righteous king as Shatanika in a hell. The king was hung upside down in a pot and was being boiled in oil.

Bhargav asked Shatanika, 'What is all this? Why are you in hell? You had accumulated a lot of punya through your righteous deeds.'

The king answered, 'Not really. I did donate a lot of alms, especially to Brahmins, but all the money for the alms came from taxing my subjects severely. So it brought no goodness to me at all. Go and tell my son that Punya is best acquired by associating with righteous people. And most important of all, tell him to pray to Shiva in the month of Chaitra and on Chaturdashi Tithi (fourteenth day of the lunar fortnight).'

When Bhargav returned, he related what he had been told to Sahasranika. Sahasranika did not stop donating alms. But the money for such alms no longer came out of the royal treasury. The king worked as a labourer and used this money for the donation of alms. He also observed the vrata that his father had asked him to observe in honour of Shiva.

2.45 Parashuram—

There was a king named Gadhi (pronounced as *Gaadhi*). His daughter was name Satyavati. Satyavati was married to the sage Richika. Richika arranged for a spectacular sacrifice. Some rice pudding was obtained from the yajna and Richika gave it to his wife Satyavati.

He said, 'Split this rice pudding into two halves. Eat half yourself and give the remaining half to your mother. Here, let me divide it. This is your half and that is your mother's. We are Brahmins. So we will have a son who will display the traits of a Brahmin. Your father is a Kshatriya, and your mother will have a son who will behave like a Kshatriya.'

Saying this, Richika went off to meditate in the forest. But mother and daughter managed to mix up their halves. In the course of his meditations, Richika realized that Satyavati was going to give birth to a Brahmin son who would display Kshatriya traits.

Through his powers, he managed to postpone this birth by a generation. So Satyavati gave birth to Jamadagni. It was Jamadagni's son Parashuram who exhibited all the Kshatriya like characteristics.

Gadhi's son was Vishvamitra. Vishvamitra was born a Kshatriya. But because of the mixing up of the rice pudding, Vishvamitra turned out to be Brahmin-like.

There was a king of the Haihaya dynasty named Arjun. He had a thousand arms. He had also obtained the boon that flaming fire itself would be perpetually present on the tip of his arrow. Whenever he shot an arrow, the fire from the tip of the arrow burnt up the target. In this fashion, Arjuna used to burn up villages, cities and forests. He once burnt up the hermitages of sages. And one of the sages cursed Arjun that he would be killed by Parashuram.

Parashurama learnt the art of fighting from Shiva himself. While Parashuram was away learning how to fight, Arjuna arrived in Jamadagni's hermitage. Jamadagni had a wonderful cow (dhenu), known as a kamadhenu because it produced whatever objects one asked (Kama) from it. Using this Kamadhenu, Jamadagni treated Arjun and his entrie retinue to a royal feast.

Arjun asked Jamadagni to give him this cow, but the sage refused. Arjun then asked his soldiers to forcibly take away the cow. But just as this was going on, Parashuram arrived. He killed Arjun, slicing off Arjun's thousand arms in the process.

Having disposed of Arjun, Parashuram went off to meditate and pay another visit to Shiva.

Taking advantage of Parashuram's absence, Arjun's sons invaded Jamadagni's hermitage. They killed Jamadagni. When Parashurama returned, he exacted vengeance for this evil deed. He killed Arjuna's sons. Since Arjuna and his sons happened to be Kshatriyas, Parashuram also killed all the Kshatriyas in the world. He did this not once, but twenty-one times over. Why twenty-one times? The reason was that there were twenty-one weapon-marks on the dead Jamadagni's body.

But killing was a crime and Parashurama had committed a sin. As penance, Parashuram donated cows and performed a lot of Tapa. He also arranged an Ashvamedha Yagya, the great horse-sacrifice. All this did not prove to be atonement enough. To complete the penance, Parashuram sought the advice of the sage Kashyapa. Kashyapa told him to perform the donation that is known as Tulaa-Purush. A Tula (or 'Tulaa-danda') is a pair of scales; the person (Purush) who is performing the donation is placed on one side of the weighing scale. On the other side are placed objects like honey, clarified butter, molasses, clothing and gold. The weight of the objects being donated has to be equal to the weight of the person performing the donation. This is known as 'Tulapurush'. Parashuram performed tulapurusha and was freed from his sin.

2.46 The Various Hells—

There are several hells. Each hell is earmarked for a specific type of sinner. A killer of Brahmins, a false witness, a liar and a drinker of wine is sent to the hell named 'Rourava'.

'Shukara' hell is meant for thieves and killers of cattle. Killers of Kshatriyas and Vaishyas are also sent there.

Those who commit infanticide are sent to 'Taptalouha'—the hell where hot iron rods are used to beat the sinner.

A person who insults his teacher or criticizes the Vedas goes to the hell known as 'Taptakhala'.

Those who insult Gods, Brahmins or kings are sent to 'Krimibhaksha'.

The hell known as 'Lalabhaksha' is reserved for those who eat without offering food to the Gods.

A Brahmin who eats what he should not goes to 'Vishasana'.

Sellers of wine are to be found in the hell known as Rudhirandha', and killers of bees in the hell called 'Vaitarani'.

Cheats are sent to 'Krishna', and destroyers of trees to 'Asipatravana'.

A hunter of deer goes to 'Vahnijvala'; the hell called 'Agnimaya' is reserved for arsonists; and the one known as 'Sandamsha' for those who fail to complete a Vrata (religious fasting; promises; vows; sacraments).

If you accept your son as a teacher, you are sure to go to 'Shvabhojana' hell.

The punishment is strictly in proportion to the crime committed. But penance diminishes the severity of the sin. The best form of penance is prayer to Shiva. Even if one merely remembers Shiva, that is enough.

2.47 Geography and Topography of Earth—

The earth is divided into seven regions (dvipas), The names of these regions are as follows: Jambudvipa, Plakshadvipa, Shalmalidvipa, Kushadvipa, Krounchadvipa, Pushkaradvipa and Shakadvipa. These seven regions are surrounded by seven seas.

The names of the seas are the following: Lavana, Ikshu, Sarpi, Dadhi, Dugdha, Jala, and Rasa.

Mount Sumeru is right in the middle of Jambudvipa. To the north of Sumeru are the mountains Nila and Shvetabhangi and to the south of Sumeru are the mountains Himavan, Hemakuta and Nishada. These mountains are full of all sorts of jewels.

Jambudvipa is divided into many parts (varshas). Right in the centre, where Mount Sumeru is located, is Ilavritavarsha. To the south of Sumeru are Bharatavarsha, Kimpurushavarsha and Harivarsha. To the north of Sumeru is Ramyakavarasha. Next to this is Hiranmayavarsha and further north is Uttarakuruvarsha.

The four major mountains in Ilavritavarsha are Mandara, Gandhamadana, Vipula and Suparshva. They are respectively to the east, south, west, and north of Sumeru.

Bhadrashvavarsha is to the east of Sumeru and Ketumalavarsha is to the west. On the top of Mount Sumeru is Brahma's famous city.

The holy river Ganga flows through the sky and divides into four. The names of these tributaries are Sita, Alakanada, Chakshu and Bhadra. Sita flows to the east of Sumeru, Nanda or Alakananda to the south, Chakshu to the west, and Bhadra to the north.

Bharatavarsha is bounded by mountain ranges on the north and the sea on the south. Bharatavarsha is divided into nine parts. The names of eight of these parts are Indradyumna, Kaseru, Tamraparna, Soumy, Gabhastimana, Nagadvipa, Gandharva and Varuna. The ninth part is an island surrounded by the ocean.

On the eastern side of Bharatavarsha live the Kiraats, on the western the Yvans, on the southern are the Andhras, and on the northern side are the Turasks.

The seven major mountains in Bharatavarsha are named Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Shuktimana, Riksha, Vindhya and Pariyatra. From each of these mountains several rivers flow.

Bharatavarsha is a sacred place. Only those who have accumulated punya over a thousand human lives get to be born in Bharatavarsha. Shiva is always present here to offer salvation to the residents.

2.48 Astronomy—

How far do the boundaries of Bhuloka (earth) extend? These boundaries extend to the furthest points that can be lit up by the rays of the Sun and the Moon. Above the region of the Sun is that of the Moon. This is successively followed by the regions of Budha

(Mercy), Shukra (Venus), Mangala (Mars), Brihaspati (Jupiter), Shani (Saturn) and the Nakshatras (stars).

Next comes the Sapta-rishi-loka, the circle of the seven great sages (the constellation Ursa majoris). These regions beyond the earth are known as Bhuvvarloka. Beyond it is the Swarga-loka or the Swarga (heaven). Bhuloka, Bhuvvarloka and Swarloka are destroyed in the destruction that comes at the end of a Kalpa.

Regions which are further beyond are not destroyed at the end of a Kalpa. The first of these regions is Dhruva-loka, the circle of the Pole Star. Next come Mahar-loka, the Jana-loka, the Tapa-loka and the Satya-loka.

Including the earth, there are thus seven regions (lokas) that have been mentioned. Under the earth is the underworld (known as the Patal-loka). This is also divided into seven regions. Their names are Patal, Satal, Vital, Nital, Mahatal, Agryasatal and Rasatal.

2.49 Manvantaras (measurement of time in terms of celestial eras of creation and destruction)—

Each Manvantara is ruled over by a Manu, and there are fourteen Manvantaras in any Kalpa. The various Manvantars and Kalpas are units of measurement of eras in the celestial cycle of birth and death, or of creation and destruction.

The Gods (Devas), the seven great sages (Saptarishis), and the Indra, change from one Manvantara to another.

The first Manu was Svayambhuva. The name of the chief God then was Yama, and the names of the seven sages were Marichi, Atri, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vashishtha.

The second Manu was Svarochisha. The name of the chief God then was Tushita, and the names of the seven sages were Agnidhra, Agnivaha, Medha, Medhatithi, Vasu, Jyotishvana and Dyutimana.

The third Manu was Uttam. The name of the chief God then was Rishabh, and the names of the seven sages were the Urjjas etc. [The individual names of the sages are not given.]

The fourth Manu was Tamas. The name of the chief God then was Satya, and the names of the seven sages were Gargya, Prithu, Agni, Janya, Dhata, Kapinka and Kapivana.

The fifth Manu was Raivat. The name of the chief God then was Raibhya, and the names of the seven sages were Vedavahu, Jaya, Muni, Vedashira, Hiranyaroma, Parjanya and Urddhavahu.

The sixth Manu was Chakshusha. There were five types of Gods in the sixth Manvantara, and their names were Adya, Prasuta, Ribhu, Prithugra and Lekha. The names of the seven sages were Bhrigu, Naha, Vivasvana, Sudharma, Viraja, Atinama, and Asashishnu.

The seventh Manvantara is the one that is underway now at present. The seventh Manu is Vaivasvat. The names of the seven sages are Atri, Vashishtha, Bhavya, Kashyapa, Gautam, Bharadvaja and Vishvamitra.

The remaining seven Manvantaras will come in the future. The eighth Manu will be Savarni.

The Shiva Puran gets extremely confused here and it is not possible to make out clearly who the Gods will be in the future Manvantaras. But the names of the seven sages of the eighth Manvantara are the following—Viravana, Avanivana, Sumantra, Dhritimana, Vasu, Varishnu and Arya.

The nine Manu will be Rohit. The names of the seven sages will be Medhatithi, Vasu, Bhargav, Angira, Savana, Havya and Poulaha.

The tenth Manu will be Merusavarni. The name of the chief God then will be Dvishimanta, and the names of the seven sages will be Havishmana. Pulaha, Sukriti, Ayomukti, Vashishtha, Prayati and Nabhara.

The eleventh Manu will be Brahmasavarni. The names of the seven sages will be Havishmana, Kashyapa, Vapushmana, Varuna, Atreya, Anagha and Angira.

The twelfth Manu will be Dharmasavarni. The names of the sages will be Dyuti, Atreya, Angira, Tapasvai, Kashyapa, Taposhana and Taporati.

The thirteenth Manu will be Rouchya. The names of the seven sages will be Kashyapa, Magadha, Ativahya, Angirasa, Atreya, Vashishtha and Ajita.

The fourteenth and last Manu will be Bhoutya. The names of the seven sages are not mentioned.

What about the Gods of the seventh Manvantara, the era that is now current? The Gods now are forty-nine vayus, eleven rudras, two ashvinis, twelve adityas and eight vasus.

{Note—Kalpa, Manvantar and Yugs (Time measurement)—References: (i) Vishnu Puran, Chapter 2, Canto 8, verse nos. 60-68; (ii) Tripadvibhut Maha-Naryan Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 3, paragraph nos. 8, 10-15.

(a) 1 *Kalpa* is equivalent to 1 day in the creator Brahma's total life span of 100 years. Each Kalpa consists of 1000 four-Yug cycles, called the 'Chatur Yugs'. The visible creation's one life-span consisting of this four-Yug cycle called the 'Chatur Yugs' is this one day of Brahma. At the end of this Chatur Yug, there would be dissolution or the so-called 'dooms-day' when everything would be submerged in water. Then the next phase of life consisting of the next four-Yug cycle would start.

(b) Each Kalpa (i.e. 1 day of Brahma's life) is also divided into 14 *Manvantars*, and each such Manvantar is ruled by one Manu, the first male. Therefore, 1 Manu rules over 71.42 (1000/4) four-Yug cycles.

We are now passing through the 51st year of Brahma's life, and our present Kaliyug belongs to the 7th Manvantar out of the 14 Manvantars, and its Manu is called Vaivasvata, and it is 28th Kaliyug of the four-Yug cycle.

In human years, 1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion (4.32×10^9) years.

(c) Each 4-era cycle consists of the following *Yugs*—

(1) The *Satayug* is the first era of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and destruction. It is also called *Krityug* because elaborate rituals of fire sacrifices based on the Vedas were done during this phase, and hence it is often called the era of great Vedic fire sacrifices. It is equivalent to 4800 divine years of Gods, and 17,28,000 human years.

(2) The *Tretayug* is equivalent to 3600 divine years of Gods, and 12,96,000 human years. It is second era of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and destruction. It was during this Yug that Lord Ram manifested on earth as an incarnation of Vishnu, and it concluded when the Lord left the earth for his heavenly abode.

(3) The *Dwaparyug* is equivalent to 2400 divine years of Gods, and 8,64,000 human years. It is third era of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and destruction. It was during this Yug that Lord Krishna manifested on earth as an incarnation of Vishnu, and it concluded when the Lord left the earth for his heavenly abode.

(4) The *Kaliyug* is equivalent to 1200 divine years of Gods, and 4,32,000 human years. It is the current fourth era of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and destruction. Out of it, roughly 5000-5500 years have elapsed. It would ultimately end with the great deluge or Doomsday when the entire world would be drowned/submerged in water of the rising ocean.

The next Kalpa would come after that in cyclic form. This happens because at the end of Kaliyug, sins and evils would have reached such a crescendo that the Supreme Being no longer is able to tolerate it though he is most tolerant, magnanimous and forgiving, and decides to finally wind up the whole thing by punishing the world by clean sweeping the slate. Only the righteous and auspicious few survive who would become the progenitors of the next cycle.

There are four eras, called 'Yugs', in the celestial cycle of creation and annihilation according to the Hindu belief. These are no formal boundaries segregating any two individual eras as such, to distinguish one from the other. They coalesce and seamlessly merge one into the other. The transition from one era to another is smooth, it's almost like going up a hill station from the heated plains below—as we gradually ascend the slope of the mountain, the air gradually becomes cooler and purer. The moral conduct of the people, their standard of mind and intellect, their thought processes and ideals, their norms of behaviours and criterion to decide what is good and what is bad, their definition of righteousness, virtuousness, nobility, propriety, probity, ethics, morality, justice as well as emancipation, salvation, liberation, deliverance, devotion, worship and spiritualism etc.—all these and relevant other aspects determined the characteristics and general demeanours of a particular era or age. In this context, the first era called the 'Kritiyug' was considered the best and the ideal era. With the fall in standards and the gradual creeping in of evil, vices, perversions and other degrading and denigrating qualities which seeped into the moral fiber of the people, the first phase transformed into the second era called the 'Treta Yug'. It was in this era that Lord Ram took birth. The third era was 'Dwapar Yug'—the age of Lord Krishna, in which the legendary Mahabharata clan war between two clans was fought for most worldly of things. The present, the fourth and the last era, is called 'Kaliyug', and in this we live. As we can observe, a whole book can be written on the characteristic features of 'Kaliyug' and its people, the moral fabric and their way of thinking which is marked by selfishness, perversion and all the vices and evils which one can think of.

This short commentary is to highlight the fact that Sri Ram's reign in 'Tretayug' was different from the rest of the 'Yugs' which came after him. Surdas has clearly hinted at the gradual fall in moral standards when he says that 'the righteousness and virtuous conduct that characterized the earlier era called Kritiyug became a dominant and salient feature in people's life even in Treta Yug'. It was not a general law or norm of behaviour during Treta, but since the Lord Sri Ram himself had ascended the throne, such virtues did become a reality even when not expected.

Goswami Tulsidas has cited the various measurements of time in a Doha being a part of the invocational lines of Lanka Kand of his epic *Ram Charit Manas*, as well as in Dohawali as Doha no. 130. To quote—"Oh mind! Why don't you worship Lord Ram (the Viraat Purush, the cosmic Lord) whose bow resembles Kaal (the time factor and death or end of creation), and the arrows are like the various divisions (fractions) of time such as a Lava, a Nimesh, a Parmaan, a Yug (era or epoch), a Baras (year), and a Kalpa."

Now, let us see what these individual terms referring to various measurements of time technically mean. The smallest fraction of time is the *Parmaan*, i.e. the time taken by light to pass through an atom, or the time taken by a photon to travel through an atom, or for an atom to oscillate.

The *Nimesh* is the time taken for the eyelid to close and open once.

The *Lav* is equivalent to 36 such Nimesh.

The *Jug* or *Yug* is an era or an epoch; it may consist of a hundred years or thousands of years. According to Hindu belief, one cycle of creation and destruction of the whole world consists of 4 Yugs—viz. the Sata Yug, the Treta Yug when Lord Ram was born, the Dwapar Yug when Lord Krishna came down to earth, and the Kali Yug which is the current era of the four Yug cycle. The ‘Kalpa’ is equivalent to 1 day in the life of Brahma, the creator; it is equal to 1000 four-Yug cycles.

The word *Kaal* has many connotations—it refers to death, an end, conclusion of what exists, a frame of time, a notion of time that is relative, creating the sense of present, the past and the future.

In practice, Tulsidas means that whatever or whoever that is born or created in this world is bound to die or come to an end. Nothing and no one is eternal and imperishable. Some exist for a fraction of time, some longer for many years, and some others for thousands of years. Even Brahma the creator has his life-span fixed and measured. There is an Upanishad known as Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atarva Veda tradition in which the life-span of Brahma is clearly defined in its Canto 3, paragraph nos. 8-9. }

2.50 Vaivasvata Manu—

The assembled sages wished to know from sage Romaharshan (who was narrating the Shiva Puran to them) the details of Vaivasvata Manu’s birth.

Romaharshan replied—‘The sage Kashyapa’s son was Vivasvana or the sun. The sun was married to Tvashta’s (same as Vishvakarma) daughter Samjna. Vivasvana and Samjana had three children, Vaivasvat, Yam and Yamuna.

Samjna could not however stand the strong energy of her husband, the sun. From her own body she created Chhaya, a woman who looked just like her. Samjna and Chhaya could not be distinguished from each other.

Samjna told Chhaya, ‘Stay here and pretend to be Samjna. Look after my three children Vaivasvata, Yama and Yamuna. I am going off to my father’s house. Don’t tell anyone that you are not Samjna.’

Chhaya agreed, ‘I will do as you advise, but the moment someone grasps me by the hair (i.e. threatens me), I will divulge the truth.’

Samjna went to Tvashta’s house. When she had spent quite some time there, her father got suspicious and wanted to know why she was not returning to her husband. Samjna therefore adopted the form of a mare and began to live in the kingdom that is known as Uttarakuru.

Meanwhile, the Sun and Chhaya had a son named Savarni. It was clear that Chhaya doted on Savarni. In comparison, Yam felt neglected. Yam was still very young and in a fit of rage, he kicked Chhaya. Chhaya cursed Yam. Yam was very surprised at this, since no mother curses her own son. He went and reported it to the Sun. The Sun deduced that Chhaya could not be Yam’s mother. He grasped Chhaya by the hair and the truth came out.

The Sun then went to Tvashta in search of Samjna. It was discovered that Samjna had done all this because she could not bear the energy of her husband, the mighty Sun

God. Tvashta chiselled off some of some part of the Sun's energy so that his radiance became a little less.

Learning that Samjna had adopted the form of a mare, the Sun adopted the form of a horse. He went and met his wife. As horse and mare, they had two children. These were the twin Gods known as the Ashvinis. They were also called Nasatya and Dasra.

Vaivasvat Manu performed a yajna so as to have a son. From the sacrifice, a daughter Ila was born. Chandra's son Budha married Ila and they had a son named Pururava. This was the origin of the lunar dynasty which started with Pururva.

Later on, Vaivasvat Manu had nine sons. Their names were Ikshvaku, Shivi, Nabhaga, Dhrishnu, Sharyati, Narishyanta, Isha, Karusha and Priyavrata. These sons were the originators of the solar dynasty.'

2.51 Epilogue—

The assembled sages were gratified at Romaharshan having recited for them the Shiva Puran. They worshipped Romaharshan. But, warned Romaharshan, never divulge what I have told you, to those who are disrespectful or to those who do not believe in God.

Repeatedly, Shiva himself appears in order to bless his devotees. A person who donates the Shiva Puran, along with gold and a bull, gets to live for ever in Shivaloka.

OM NAMAH SHIVAAYA

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Lord Shiva-Book 2

The Legend of Lord Shiva:

The Maha-Deva and The Great God

(Lord Shiva's Glories, Legends, Shiva-Puran & Upanishads)

CHAPTER 3

UPANISHADS DEDICATED TO LORD SHIVA

In this section we will be reading all the great and magnificent Upanishads dedicated to Lord Shiva and dealing with the 'Shiva Tattwa', the essential metaphysical and spiritual philosophy that governs the universal truthful principle known as 'Shiva', the manifested form of which has been visualized by the scriptures as a divine Being known as Lord Shiva, the Maha-Deva.

The Upanishads that we will be reading under this section are the following—

(a) Upanishads belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition: (2.1) Kalagni Rudra Upanishad; (2.2) Dakshin Murti Upanishad; (2.3) Rudra Hridaya Upanishad; (2.4) Skanda Upanishad; and (2.5) Rudra Upanishad.

(b) Upanishads belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition: (2.6) Sharav Upanishad; (2.7) Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, and (2.8) Neel Rudra Upanishad.

3.1 Krishna Yajur Veda tradition's Kalagni Rudra Upanishad—

This Upanishad is revealed in the form of a dialogue between sage Sanatkumar and Kalagni-Rudra. It describes the proper way of marking and wearing the 'Tripundra' (three horizontal lines marked on the forehead, the chest and the shoulders (verse no. 3) of devotees of Lord Shiva using the ash of the sacrificial fire) along with its spiritual and metaphysical importance and significance. This Tripundra is an auspicious symbol of Lord Shiva who is regarded as the greatest of ascetics and the wisest, most enlightened and omniscient Being in creation. The wearer of this sign of the Lord, if he is not an imposter, becomes a personification of the Lord, and exemplifies the auspicious and glorious virtues the Lord stands for.

The whole idea of making these three lines of the Tripundra at the three places is to feel spiritually elevated and blessed, to feel holy and purified, and to feel the presence of the Lord very close to one's own self and be reassured of the Lord's constant

protection. It is an external sign to indicate that the wearer is not only god-fearing but also keep the various vows and follows the different tenets of the scriptures diligently.

The metaphysical significance and importance of the three lines of the Tripundra have been elaborately described in verse nos. 6-8 of this Upanishad. Other Upanishads relevant to this present Upanishad and belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda are the Dakshin Murti Upanishad, Skand Upanishad, Kath Rudra Upanishad, Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, and Panch Brahm Upanishad. The Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition describes a discussion between Kalagni Rudra and crow sage Bhusund regarding the importance and significance of the Rudraksha beads used to make the prayer rosary by which the Mantras of Shiva are repeated.

1. The Rishi¹ of this Kalagnirudro-panishad or Kalagni Rudra Upanishad is ‘Samvartak Agni’²; its Chanda³ is ‘Anushtup’⁴; and its Devta or patron God⁵ is Kalagni Rudra⁶. This Upanishad is invoked to worship Lord Kalagni Rudra as the almighty Lord who personifies the Supreme Being who has revealed himself as the Panch Brahm (refer verse no. 3) embodying the entire creation. [The Lord’s symbolic presence is marked by the three lines of the Tripundra as described in the following verses.] (1).

[Note—¹*Rishi* is the first sage or ‘seer’ who had envisioned a particular metaphysical concept during one of his meditative trances. Such divine and eclectic revelations were then made known to the rest of the world in the form of poetical compositions called Chanda. This system of composing the religious text of the scriptures is in vogue since earlier times and such verses are called hymns as they are dedicated to the offering of prayers and honouring the chosen deity for which the particular hymns is meant. These hymns are also called Mantras because they are like mystical formula specific to that deity; they help the worshipper to activate the dynamic forces of Nature and creation as represented by this deity who is actually a personified form of these forces. Each deity had a particular hymns dedicated to it much like we have specific formulas in science or mathematics to solve specific problems. No one formula applies to all the problems in a universal manner, though there are some universal ones also which can be applied to all the cases, such as the Mantra OM which is used equally for all the deities. The reason is that OM represents the supreme transcendental Brahm whose manifestations all these individual deities or Godheads are. This is like the case of one listening to a particular radio station of his choice when he must tune-in to the particular frequency in which that radio station broadcasts.

²The phrase *Samvartak Agni* refers to the fire that engulfs the earth at the time of dooms-day, because the word ‘Samvartak’ means the end or conclusion of an era or a period of time, and Agni means fire. It also has two other connotations—viz. (1) The dooms-day cloud, because at the time of conclusion of one cycle of creation and destruction there is torrential rain which causes a deluge that drown the entire habitation on the surface of the earth. In this scenario, only certain forms of aquatic life survive, and from it the seed of the next cycle of creation is sown. (2) The fire burning under the bed of the ocean and in the bowls of the earth which keeps the water of the ocean as well as the underground springs warm. This fire is called ‘Barvaanal’ or ‘Badvaanal’. In the present verse, this fire has been personified as the sage who first conceptualised this Upanishad.

³The *Chanda* is a particular style of poetical composition in which all the ancient scriptures were composed. All the Vedas were composed in this method.

⁴One of the styles is called *Anushtup Chanda*. It is verse of four lines with eight letters in each line. Therefore, the total number of letters in an Anushtup Chanda is $4 \times 8 = 32$ letters or syllables.

⁵*Devta* is the deity or God to whom a particular sacred hymn is dedicated. It is this deity who is worshipped, lauded and revered as the patron God whose blessings are sought by the worshipper when he reads a particular scripture, such as this Upanishad dedicated to Lord Kalagni-Rudra. This Upanishad, from the metaphysical and spiritual point of view, invokes Lord Shiva's auspicious virtues of destroying all the worldly delusions and taints that shroud the devotee like the clouds of the dooms-day, completely enveloping his wisdom and intellect in a veil of darkness of ignorance.

⁶*Kalagni-Rudra* literally means Lord Shiva, the concluder, in his most ferocious form which is like the fire of dooms-day. Shiva is the greatest ascetic, a great renunciate, most auspicious and regarded as an enlightened God. So his invocation helps the spiritual seeker to burn all his worldly delusions and taints arising out of ignorance and attachments to falsehoods. This paves the path for his ultimate liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Lord Shiva is the designated Authority that controls death and destruction, not only of the gross physical world and its visible objects but also metaphorically of all the evil tendencies, all the blemishes and faults that are characteristic of this deluding world and which usually cover the soul of the creature like a layer of thick scum floating on the surface of the otherwise crystal-clear waters of the mountain lake.

Usually Lord Shiva is depicted in the scriptures and in iconography as sitting in a perpetual state of Samadhi or deep meditation, remaining ever calm and peaceful as well as totally dispassionate and neutral towards everything that has got anything to do with Maya or worldly delusions, deceptions, attachments and attractions. But at the same time the Lord is not unaware of his moral obligations as the patron God of ascetics who is supposed to uphold the highest traditions of righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility, probity and propriety as well as ensure that all the negative, demonic and evil factors of creation are vanquished and crushed so that positive virtues are always ascendant. Whenever this does not happen, whenever a dynamic remedy is needed to overcome a malignant force, Shiva assumes the form of Kalagni Rudra—literally the ferocious form of Shiva which is very angry and like the doomsday fire that destroys everything it beholds. After all, if the enemy is strong, then merely being merciful and compassionate is not the answer. A strong dose of antibiotic is needed to overcome a virulent form of virus, and no matter how much a person is adherent to the philosophy of non-violence, he is well advised not to extend this philosophy to ridiculous proportions of showing mercy to the virus by refusing to take antibiotic medicines because they would kill the virus!

So, while on the one hand Lord Shiva is invoked the spiritual aspirant to bless him with spiritual peace and bliss, the Lord has to be invoked to overcome all the powerful enemies of the Spirit that are ready to impede the aspirant's spiritual progress.

Refer 'Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad' of the Sam Veda tradition in which Lord Kalagni Rudra preaches the crow sage Bhusund about the importance of the Rudraksha beads used in the preparation of the prayer rosary. Further, other Upanishads relevant to this present Upanishad and belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda are the Dakshin Murti Upanishad, Skand Upanishad, Kath Rudra Upanishad, Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, and Panch Brahm Upanishad.]

2. In some ancient time, sage Sanatkumar¹ asked Lord Kalagni-Rudra (Lord Shiva), 'Oh Lord! Please explain to me the metaphysical and spiritual importance and significance of 'Tripundra'² in detail. What is it? Where should it be placed? What is its length (or

measurement)? How many lines does it have? What is its Mantra, and what is its power and potential? Who is its patron deity or God? Who uses it, and what are its benefits?' (2).

[Note—¹Sage *Sanatkumar* is considered as one of the four Manas Putras or the mental-born sons of the creator Brahma. The other three are Sanak, Sanat-sujaat and Sanandan. They are regarded in a perpetual state of boyhood.

Sanatkumar had taught the greatness of Vishnu to demon Vrittaasur, the enemy of Indra, the king of Gods. He also taught spiritual wisdom to sage Narad, the celestial sage.

Sanat-sujaat taught spiritual wisdom to Dhritrashtra who was the blind father of the Kauravas of the epic Mahabharat fame. Sanak is said to an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu. Sanandan is regarded as the ancient preacher of the Sankhya Shastra, even more ancient than Kapil.

²The word *Tripundra* has two parts—'tri' and 'pundra'. Tri means three while the word Pundra refers to the three horizontal lines marked on the body (the forehead, the chest and the shoulders) by Hindus. The Pundra can be horizontal or crosswise lines, in which case it is called the 'Tiryak Pundra', or it can be vertical or upright lines, in which case it is called 'Urdhva Pundra'. The Tiryak Pundra or Tripundra is worn by devotees of Lord Shiva and initiated ascetics and is marked by the paste of the ash obtained from the pit of the fire sacrifice by mixing it with water. Each of these three lines has a deep religious importance, and they have been explained in verse nos. 6-8 below.

3. Lord Kalagni-Rudra explained to sage Sanatkumar—'The holy ash of the fire sacrifice is used to mark the lines of the Tripundra. The divine Mantras 'Sadyojatadi', which are called the 'Panch Brahm' Mantras¹, should be invoked at the time of marking the lines of the Tripundra using this holy ash. [There is a special Upanishad dealing with the concept of Panch Brahm, and it is known as the 'Panch Brahm Upanishad'. The concept of 'Sadyojaat' and 'Panch Brahm' have been elaborately explained in its verse no. 1]

[Since these 'Panch Brahms' are personifications of the stupendous powers and potentials as well as the characteristic glorious attributes and divine virtues of the five fundamental elements of creation (viz. earth, water, fire, air or wind, and sky or space), when their respective Mantras are invoked while marking the three lines of the Tripundra on the body of the worshipper, it is like establishing these glories and divine virtues on the body itself to indicate that the worshipper is blessed and empowered with the divine virtues as represented by these dynamic forces of Nature called the Panch Brahms. He becomes a living embodiment of the Godhead worshipped as the latter is supposed to be now honorably established in the worshipper's own body.

Thus, the following Mantras should be invoked to consecrate and purify the three lines of the Tripundra and bestow divine powers to them—'Agniriti Bhasm' for the fire element, 'Vayuriti Bhasm' for the air or wind element, 'Jalmiti Bhasm' for the water element, 'Sthalmity Bhasm' for the earth element, and 'Vyomriti Bhasm' for the sky element².

The ash should be picked up in the fingers while pronouncing the Mantra 'Maanastok'. It should be made into a thick paste by adding required amount of water while pronouncing the Mantra 'Ma No Mahan'. Sufficient quantity of this paste of dampened sacrificial holy ash should first be placed on three parts of the body, viz. the forehead, chest and shoulders, while pronouncing the Mantra 'Triyayunsha'. Then this paste is spread as three horizontal lines at these places while pronouncing the Mantra 'Trayambak'.

This process of smearing the sacred ash on the body is called 'Shambhav Vrat' or a form of religious duty and sacrament which has been extolled in all the Vedas and lauded by all those who are experts in these scriptures.

Those who aspire for liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, those seekers who wish that they do not have to take birth again in this world, should invariably wear this Tripundra in the aforesaid manner² (3).

[Note—¹*Panch Brahm*—(a) These are the personification of the stupendous divine powers and potentials of the Supreme Being as manifested in the form of the 'five basic elements of creation' such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth. The word *Panch* refers to the numeral five, while *Brahm* refers to the supreme cosmic Consciousness which is at the core of the coming into being of the entire creation.

(b) According to another version, these Panch Brahms are the five manifestation of the Supreme Being, and they are Sun God, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, Shiva the concluder and annihilator, Ganesh the most revered deity in the Hindu pantheon who is invoked at the beginning of any auspicious effort, and Shakti or the divine Goddess personifying the stupendous energy in Nature.

(c) Again, since everything in existence has been created from the five basic elements, it follows that Panch Brahm also refers to the *five sheaths or Koshas* that surround the pure conscious Atma which is the truthful identity of the creature. These five Koshas are the following--'Annamaye Kosh' or the food sheath, 'Pranmaye Kosh' or the vital wind sheath, 'Manomaye Kosh' or the mental sheath, 'Vigyanmaye Kosh' or the intellect sheath, and 'Anandmaye Kosh' or the bliss sheath. These sheaths cover the Atma or pure conscious self like various coverings or shrouds wrapping any object. The *Annamaye Kosh* is that which was created by the intake of food, was nourished and developed by food, and at the end it finally disintegrates into the basic ingredients that constitutes food and merges with the earth element from where the food has derived its original ingredients. This forms the gross body of the creature.

The *Pranmaye Kosh* consists of the five vital winds (Pran, Apaana, Vyana, Udaana, and Samaana) along with the five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, excretory and reproductive).

The *Manomaye Kosh* consists of the mind and the five organs of perceptions (ears, eyes, nose, tongue and skin), while the *Vigyanmaye Kosh* consists of the combined apparatus made of the intellect and these five organs of perception.

A combination of these three sheaths, i.e. Pranmaye Kosh (vital wind sheath), Manomaye Kosh (the mental sheath) and Vigyanmaye Kosh (the intellect sheath) is what is known as the 'Ling Deha' of a creature, or the ethereal form of the corporeal body. This is the subtle body of the creature.

The sheath in which the pure conscious self is not aware of the 'Ling Deha' is called *Anandmaye Kosh*. This forms the causal body of the creature".

These five sheaths are called the 'Panch Kosha'.

(d) Life in this creation is sustained by the wind or air element, as is evident from the fact that it is possible to survive for a reasonable time without water and food but one immediately suffocates to death if there is no air. These vital winds or air element takes five principal forms, called the *Panch Prans* which are personifications of the magnificent abilities of the supreme Brahm to sustain life in a quiet and subtle manner. These primary and principal vital wind called *Pran* lives in a subtle form in the subtle space of the heart (and keeps this organ functioning); the vital wind called *Apaana* lives in the region of the anus (and is responsible for excretion of the residue from the intestines); the *Samaana* wind is found in the navel region (because it is from here that all the nerves and veins in the body radiate out from the nerve center or core called the 'Naabhi Kand',

and ensure that nutrients and other essential supplies are equally distributed in the body); the *Udaan* wind lives in the region of the throat (because this wind is synonymous with the notion of 'getting up' or 'rising', so it symbolises the creature's state of wakefulness when he speaks out, and at the same time it helps it to 'raise' and spit out cough present in the lungs); and *Vyan* spreads through the body (as it helps in maintaining equilibrium). These vital winds have been described in Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 35-38.

(e) The entire life of a religious and pious spiritual aspirant is regarded as one big wholesome fire sacrifice, and thus it is ordained that he must diligently perform the five *Panch Maha Yagyas*, or the five great noble deeds that have the same sanctity and holiness as doing a formal fire sacrifice. These are the following—(a) *Brahma Yagya*—study and teaching of the Vedas and other scriptures that enlighten the man about the ultimate Truth known as Brahm, (b) *Deva Yagya*—the performance of fire sacrifices in which offerings are given to the sacred fire which sustain the Gods and are done to honour them, (c) *Pitri Yagya*—paying homage to the spirit of dead ancestors, offering oblations to them and doing religious activities for the peace of their souls, (d) Service to mankind called *Jiva Yagya*, and (e) *Bhut Yagya*—service to all the creatures including animals, insects, plants etc., such as giving them food, shelter and protection, i.e. taking care of them. These five sacrifices have been described in Ashramo-panishad, verse no. 3.

²This invocation ensures that all these three lines become symbolic representatives of the *three worlds* representing the entire gamut of creation. These three worlds are 'Bhu' or the terrestrial world, 'Bhuvaha' or the sky just above the earth where life-forms such as birds etc. live, and 'Swaha' or the heaven representing the higher reaches of the atmosphere where exalted spirits live. In other words, by invoking the Mantras mentioned here, the worshipper symbolically empowers these three lines of the Tripundra with mystical, divine and holy powers that control the entire cosmos. By doing this, he metaphorically establishes his authority and sway over the entire realm where Lord Shiva, as Kalagni-Rudra, has his influence. Since these lines are placed across the forehead, they also signify the fact that such persons have become all-knowing and omniscient like the Lord himself.]

4. Sage Sanatkumar enquired about the length and thickness of the lines of this Tripundra (4).

5. Lord Kalagni-Rudra replied that the three lines should be made in such a way that one of the lines, the bottom one, passes through the center of the forehead at the middle point of the eyebrows just above the root of the nose, and the third line covers the top of the forehead just below the hairline on the skull (5).

6. The first line is a symbol of the 'Garhapatya Agni' (the sacred fire of the household hearth), the first letter 'A' (of the divine ethereal word OM), the second quality called 'Raja Guna' (that is one of the three basic qualities inherent in all the creatures in creation and which determine the creature's basic character and mental temperament, such as his natural propensity to have worldly attractions and passions as well as a natural tendency to remain engrossed in worldly matters), 'Bhu' Loka (or the terrestrial world inhabited by mortal creatures), the self conscious Atma (which is the true identity of the creature), the personification of the powers to act and perform that are natural and the basic requirement in all the creatures of this creation (because without this ability and strength to act and produce results, no creature can survive competition in this world where only

the fittest survives), the Rig Veda (first of the three primary Vedas), the morning sacrament (or payers offered to the Sun God representing the supreme Brahm in all its glorious magnificence), and Lord Maheshawar (or the great Lord Shiva himself) (6).

7. The second line of the Tripundra is symbolic of the sacred fire called ‘Dakshinagni’ (or the holy fire which stands a witness of donations and charities made), as well as of the second letter or syllable ‘U’ of the sublime, divine and ethereal word OM. It also stands for and personifies the following entities—the quality called ‘Sata’ (which refers to the different virtuous and noble qualities present in the spiritual aspirant, qualities which are considered as the best amongst the three primary qualities that determine the character of the individual creature), the world known as the ‘Antariksha’ (or the second world represented by the sky above the earth where the creatures with wings, e.g. the birds, live; it is the world created when the creator Brahma had pronounced ‘Bhuvaha’ at the beginning of creation), the Atma or pure consciousness (which is the true self of all the living creatures and a personification of the supreme transcendental Brahm), the powers and potentials of ‘Ichha’ (desires, wishes and aspirations, because the whole world is driven by this virtue of Ichha that is inherently present in the heart of all men, and which inspires all actions and deeds done by them, for had there been no desire and aspiration, the man would not enter into any enterprise), the Yajur Veda (the second of the primary scriptures known as the Vedas), the sacrament performed during the noon time (i.e. the second daily prayer offered to the Sun God), and the eternal and infinite Lord known as ‘Sada Shiva’ (who is omnipresent, immanent, imminent, and uniform) (7).

8. The third line of the sacred Tripundra stands for and personifies the following entities—the holy fire called ‘Ahawaniya Agni’ (or the ritualistic fire of the formal sacrifice), the third letter or syllable ‘M’ of the sublime, divine and ethereal word OM, the third quality called ‘Tama’ (which is the lowest and grossest of the three basic qualities in creation), the ‘Duloka’ or the heaven (created when Brahma pronounced ‘Swaha’ at the time of creation, and is the realm of creation where the exalted Gods have their abode), the Parmatma or the supreme Soul which is the ultimate authority and cause of the entire creation, the stupendous and magnificent powers and potentials of Gyan (truthful knowledge, erudition, sagacity, skills and wisdom which makes a man well honoured, respected and revered in this world), the Sam Veda (which is the third primary Veda), the third sacrament performed in the evening, and Lord Mahadev himself (i.e. Lord Shiva in his manifestation as the greatest and most eminent God in the pantheon of Gods in Hinduism; the word ‘Maha’ means ‘great and most exalted’, and ‘Dev’ means a ‘godhead’) (8).

9. In this way, anyone—whether he is a Brahmachari¹, a Grihastha², a Vanprastha³, or a Sanyasi⁴—who wears this Tripundra in the manner prescribed herein above, with due respect, faith and conviction, is liberated from the horrible consequences of all types of sins and misdeeds committed by them either inadvertently or willingly, whether they are major ones, being most grave and horrendous, or minor ones but still unrighteous and inauspicious. Such a wearer of Tripundra becomes holy and cleansed of all his sins and worldly taints as if he has been to all the sacred pilgrim sites, performed necessary purification rites, offered oblations to Gods, and taken the ritualistic bath there. He gets

the benefit of studying and reciting all the Vedas. He becomes so enlightened and wise that he can have easy access to all the Gods (representing all the virtues that are considered grand, righteous, auspicious and noble in creation, thereby enabling him to reach for these virtues and inculcate them easily in his own life). He is able to enjoy all types of pleasures and comforts that he wishes for, and at the end of his life he goes to the abode of Lord Rudra (Shiva). As such, having reached the pinnacle of enlightenment and spiritual liberation by merging his soul with the great Lord Shiva, who is the supreme Brahm personified, he does not have to take birth again. [That is, he has obtained the ultimate emancipation and salvation for his 'self'.]

This is how Lord Kalagni-Rudra described to sage Sanatkumar the importance and the proper way of wearing the Tripundra (9).

10. A wise and enlightened man who diligently studies this Upanishad and understands its great metaphysical importance becomes an embodiment of the virtues extolled by it (i.e. he becomes as exalted and auspicious as Lord Shiva himself). Verily, this is the truthful assertion of this Upanishad (10).

[Note—¹*Brahmachari* is a student or elder person who observes strict vows of celibacy, abstinence and self-control in all spheres of life, spending his time in studying and devoting his energy in acquisition of knowledge of the Truth.

²*Grihasta* is a householder and he marries to raise a family. This is the second phase of life.

³*Vanprastha* is the third phase of life when one who has fulfilled all his obligations towards his family and literally heads for the forest to lead the rest of his life in a peaceful way, meditating and roaming around in pilgrim centers. In practice, it is not feasible for anyone to actually go to the forest in a modern world, so this phase should be interpreted to mean when the man prepares to pass on the responsibilities of his mundane affairs to his heirs and start leading a more relaxed life, spending his time on reading the scriptures and going to visit pilgrim sites which he had not been able to do earlier due to his worldly pre-occupations.

⁴A *Sanyasi* is a person who has entered the fourth and final phase of life of total renunciation of the world and snapping all ties with it, marked by complete detachment and dispassion, and spends his time in deep contemplation and meditation. This is the phase just before death. As in the case of the Vanprastha, he need not actually go to the forest if his health does not allow for instance, because that would be tantamount to committing suicide, which is in itself a grave sin. The basic idea is to be fully detached from everything material and prepare for the imminent death.]

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3.2 Krishna Yajur Veda tradition's Dakshin Murti/Mukhi Upanishad—

The Dakshina-Murti Upanishad is dedicated to Lord Shiva who is regarded as knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment personified, and therefore the most competent one to expound upon, teach and preach subjects related to the divine wisdom pertaining to the field of metaphysics and spiritualism. This Upanishad highlights the significance and importance of the 'Shiva Tattva' or the Shiva principle, the essence and basis for

which Shiva is recognized as the greatest Lord, and worshipped as such. This realisation and knowledge of Shiva Tattva is akin to being wisened about the ultimate essence and truth of existence, the ultimate essence that is known as Brahm. This concept is reiterated in another Upanishad belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, viz. the Rudra Hridaya Upanishad.

Iconographically, this form of Shiva has other names also besides 'Dakshina-Murti', such as 'Dakshina-Mukhi'.

The word 'Murti' means a 'form or image', the word 'Mukhi' means 'facing', the word 'Dakshinaa' means 'giving away liberally as charity or donation', the word 'Dakshin' has three connotations here—viz. 'south', 'right' and 'knowledge and wisdom', and the word 'Shiva' of course means 'someone who is a personification of such glorious virtues as auspiciousness, beauty, truth, knowledge, enlightenment, wisdom, renunciation, dispassion and detachment from all things material and false, someone who is meditative and contemplative, someone who is self-realised and Brahm-realised etc.'

So we have a comprehensive picture of what this Upanishad aims to worship—it does not aim to worship Lord Shiva as the God of death and destruction but as the most enlightened and wise teacher of the philosophy of Brahm whom he personifies. Since Lord Shiva faced 'south' when he taught the ancient sages and seers who had approached him in some earlier time to gain divine wisdom and metaphysical knowledge which only he could impart to them, he was known as 'the Lord facing south'. Since the knowledge imparted by him was astoundingly unique and the most 'right or correct and precise knowledge' of metaphysics which granted 'a divine wisdom as well as vision' to its followers, it was called 'Dakshin'. Since he was liberal in giving it to the sincere spiritual aspirant, he was called 'Dakshina-Murti' or the 'one who is an icon of charity and donation, one who is very generous in giving away what is asked for without holding anything away from the alms seeker'.

What did he give away? He gave away 'knowledge and divine wisdom', and only one who has something can give it to others, therefore he is deemed to be a 'Murti', or an image, a personified form of such knowledge and divine wisdom. The word 'Dakshinaa' means 'giving charity and making donation', while 'Mukha' means 'mouth'. In other words, Lord Shiva has been extremely liberal and magnanimous in giving away whatever he has, and in this particular case he has given away knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the non-dual reality of the 'self' as a personification of Brahm. Since teaching is done by the 'mouth', hence this donation and charity that he made was through the mouth, entitling him to be called 'Dakshina-Mukhi'. This is evident in verse no. 30.

In other words, the Dakshin Murti is the form of Shiva as a wise teacher and preacher of divine knowledge which is meant to make the disciple aware of the actual principles and the truth in this world that exists behind the arcade of falsehood that is so typical of it. This knowledge enables him to attain a state of eternity and blessedness marked by eternal peace, happiness, beatitude and felicity. It's the correct and auspicious path to self and Brahm realisation.

Since it was first revealed by Lord Shiva himself, it is a revealed Upanishad.

The leading sage who was given this knowledge by Shiva was Maarkandey, who later revealed some relevant part of it when he was approached by other sages and seers led by Shaunak etc. who asked him nine questions which form the basis of the present

Upanishad. The nine questions briefly are—what is the esoteric and eclectic knowledge of the Shiva principle, who is the deity worshipped in this principle, what are the Mantras (mystical and spiritual formulas in the form of words or letters), what is the kind of devotion needed for its success, how can that esoteric and eclectic knowledge be obtained, what is the instrument to felicitate it, what offerings are to be made, what is the appropriate time for doing it, and what is its ultimate goal.

Each of these questions is answered succinctly with stress on the importance of their metaphysical and spiritual quotient rather than on mere ritualistic aspects.

Lord Shiva has been depicted in five forms as Dakshin Mukhi or Dakshin Murti. These forms are basically the same but with slight variations. The basic form has him seated on high seat with four arms in various Mudras (postures) and holding different things as symbols of one or other virtues that he possesses. The five forms build up on this basic outline, and each has a distinct Mantra (a group of letters, words or phrases having mystical and divine powers which are used to activate these latent powers in Nature for the worshipper's benefit) dedicated to it. These five Mantras are listed in this Upanishad. Refer also to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 91-94, 98-102 as well as Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 64 which also expounds this aspect of Divinity.

1. Once upon a time, the great sages called Shaunak¹ and others started a great Yagya (fire sacrifice) under a huge Vat tree (the Indian fig tree or the Banyan tree) in the country called Brahmaavarta.

During this occasion, these sages approached the immortal sage named Maarkandey² with great devotion and a sense of submission and sincerity to acquire divine wisdom and thereby satisfy their quest for eclectic knowledge about certain metaphysical questions.

They said, 'Oh great sage! How have you found immortality (i.e. a virtually never-ending long life) and how do you enjoy eternal bliss and ecstasy? [Please unravel the secret to us for our benefit.]³' (1).

[Note—¹Sage *Shaunak* was a wise and learned sage and derived his name after his father sage Shunak. He is regarded as an incarnation of Indra, the king of Gods. He was an expert on the Vedas, especially the Rik/Rig Veda and the majority of his works revolve around this particular Veda. They are known as 'Anukramanika' (indices). His magnum opus is the 'Brihad-devta' which deals with the deities of the Vedas. He had a large following of disciples, the chief being Ashwalyaana. He appears in many ancient scriptures such as Shatpath Brahmin, 13/5/3/5; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 2/5/20; Chandogya Upanishad, 1/9/3; Mundak Upanishad, 1/1/3; Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, 4/7.

²Sage Maarkandey was the son of sage Maarkandu. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, the patron God of death, so much so that when death approached him personified as Kaal when the sage was yet quite young because destiny had it that he would die still when young, he clung to the Shiva Lingam (the image of Shiva) with the greatest of devotion, surrender and urgency that comes with one facing certain death. Lord Shiva appeared and prevented Death from tying him in his snare and taking him away. The Lord blessed him with a virtual eternal life, blessing him that he would live for another

14 Kalpas (1 Kalpa = 1 day of Brahma or roughly 4.32 billion human years). His magnum opus is the 'Maarkandey Puran'. He had also edited and abridged the Manusmriti, the code of life and conduct as laid by the first human named Manu to regulate society and act as a constitution and manual for ready reference for the forthcoming human race, into eight thousand verses, and passed it to sage Bhargava. His reference comes in the Mahabharat epic when he approaches the Pandavas and taught them the principles of Dharma (code of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and nobility). He was the one who had enlightened Yudisthira that Krishna was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu (Vanapurva, 189). In the same Mahabharat, he preaches the celestial sage Narad the laws of Dharma (Anushaasan-purva, 50-62).

³The sages were doing a religious deed dedicated to Lord Shiva. Like any intelligent, prudent and wise student, they did not just want to perform the rituals in a mechanical way but wished to know the esoteric secret behind the deity they were to worship along with its metaphysical and spiritual importance and significance. So they approached their senior Maarkandey who was taught this knowledge by none other than Lord Shiva himself. The Upanishad is called Dakshin Murti because Lord Shiva had faced south while he had preached it, as well as to indicate the fact that in this capacity the Lord was acting as a wise and erudite teacher and preacher instead of his role as the concluser of creation.]

2-3. He (Maarkandey) replied, 'The secret of my long life and perpetual state of bliss and ecstasy is the knowledge of the Shiva Principle (i.e. the 'Shiva Tattva')'.

The sages enquired, 'What is the knowledge of Shiva Tattva of which you talk about? Who is its patron deity or Deva¹? What are the Mantras² used to worship and invoke its blessings? How is Japa (repetition) done with this Mantra (i.e. how is this mystical and esoteric group of letters or words having magical charm used to invoke the deity of this Shiva Tattva and attain it)? What Mudras³ are to be adopted for this purpose? What is having firm devotion and conviction in them? What are the means by which that great mystical, esoteric and eclectic divine knowledge and wisdom can be got or accessed? What is the equipment or instrument that can aid in its acquisition? What offerings are to be made to it or for it⁴? What is the appropriate time for doing it? And what is its ultimate goal (i.e. what is the final destination which a spiritual aspirant reaches if he pursues this particular line of philosophy)?' (2-3).

[Note—¹The word *Deva* has three meanings here—(a) one is the conventional meaning 'a God' or the patron deity who is offered worship by its specific Mantras and other ritualistic forms such as elaborate fire sacrifice or use of charm geometrical instruments called Tantras. (b) The second is the implied meaning 'one who shines' or 'one who shines in his glories and stands out among other such deities with its unique qualities and virtues which the worshipper intends to honour and invoke, the qualities which had inspired the worshipper to chose this particular deity over others'. Only one who 'shines' is regarded honourable and worthy of worship because he is not only pure and holy but his purity and holiness shines and lets others see their correct path in its illumination. (c) The third meaning refers to the 'ability of such exalted deities to liberally and magnanimously shower their virtues and holiness upon their devotees so that they can benefit from them even as the sun gives its light to the whole world evenly for the benefit of all creatures.

²*Mantras* are mystical formulas having divine powers. They consist of letters, words or phrases and used to invoke the blessings of the chosen deity. Each deity has a specific Mantra just like each element in Nature has been assigned specific symbol in modern

science. For example, hydrogen is recognised by the letter H, oxygen by O, nitrogen by N, carbon by C etc. The Yogtattva Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 91-94 and 98-102 expound upon the fact that Shiva is the patron deity and a personification of the fire and the sky elements respectively. It also describes the Beej Mantras, the ways of worshipping etc. of Shiva in these elements.

³The *Mudra* is a special body posture and positioning of its various external organs such as the hands, legs, head, etc. along with the various modes in which the mouth, tongue, eyes etc. are held. These form an integral part of formal forms of ritualistic worship involving Tantras (charm instruments) as well as during Japa (repetition of Mantras). These Mudras are said to harness the latent subtle and divine energy inherently present in the body of the worshipper and harmonize it with the cosmic energy of the deity being worshipped in order to bring about an integration between them and enabling the practitioner to become one with the deity.

⁴There are many ways we can interpret this particular question. In the context of ritualistic forms of worship called Yagya using the fire sacrifice, or the Tantra, i.e. the magical charm instruments used in occult forms of worship, it would mean some kind of offering that is made to the sacred fire or the chosen deity. If it's purely done from the metaphysical point of view, then acquisition of knowledge by studying of the scriptures and listening them from a teacher is treated as another form of Yagya, and it is called Gyan Yagya, or the hardships endured, disciplined maintained and strict codes of conduct observed to acquire divine knowledge. The offering in this case, as is obvious, would be diligence, devotion, sincerity, conviction, faith, concentration and focus of the mind, restrain of the senses and the disciplining of the body etc.]

4-5. He (Maarkandey) began his discourse—‘That esoteric, mystical and eclectic divine knowledge and wisdom which kindles spiritual awareness and enlightenment in a spiritual aspirant and seeker, culminating in the revelation to him of the supreme essence pertaining to Lord Shiva who is famously known as ‘Dakshina-Mukhi or Dakshina-Mukha’¹, is the known as ‘Shiva Tattva’.

The supreme transcendental Lord who winds up the entire creation at the time of its end (i.e. at the time of its conclusion, called the ‘dooms-day’), retracting it and establishing it in his own Atma or pure conscious cosmic Self (i. e. in his own bosom just like an octopus withdrawing its tentacles or a tortoise retracting its limbs in its shell) is the patron deity or Deva of this knowledge².

This Lord (i.e. the supreme transcendental Brahm in his most elementary and truthful form known as ‘Shiva Tattva’³—the primary essence, the basic elementary truth, known as the ‘Shiva Principle’, of creation) remains perpetually blissful by submerging himself in his own consciousness known as the Atma. He is self-illuminated (because illumination and light are metaphors for consciousness, enlightenment and knowledge that are holistic, divine, holy and auspicious) (4-5).

[Note—¹The word *Dakshina-Mukhi* has two parts. The second part ‘Mukha’ means ‘face’, while the word ‘Dakshin’ has three connotations here—viz. ‘south’, ‘right’ and ‘knowledge and wisdom’. Since Lord Shiva faced ‘south’ when he taught the ancient sages and seers who had approached him in some earlier time to gain divine wisdom and metaphysical knowledge which only he could impart to them, he was known as ‘the Lord facing south’. Since the knowledge imparted by him was astoundingly unique, most esoteric and divine, besides being the most ‘right’ or correct and precise ‘knowledge’ of metaphysics which granted ‘a divine wisdom as well as spiritual vision’ to its followers, making them experts and skilled in this knowledge, it was called ‘Dakshin’.

The word 'Dakshin' is derived from the word 'Daksha' which means to be an expert and skilled in any field of knowledge. Since Shiva is an expert God in the knowledge of Brahm and the Atma, he is therefore the most competent and expert teacher and preacher of this subject. A wise and skilled teacher is one who can make even difficult and rare knowledge easily accessible to this students, and for this purpose he must have a first hand experience of its intricate details so that he can solve all the problems, satisfy their queries, and attend to other nitty-gritties.

In other words, the *Dakshina-Murti* is the 'image' ('Murti') form of Shiva as a wise and enlightened teacher as well as an expert preacher of divine knowledge which is meant to make the disciple aware of the actual principles and the secret truth hidden in this world behind the arcade of falsehood and deceptions that are so typical of this deluding material world so as to enable him to attain a state of eternal blessedness marked by eternal spiritual peace, happiness, beatitude and felicity. It's the correct and auspicious path to self-realisation and Brahm-realisation. And since he had done so while facing south, he came to be known as 'Dakshin Mukhi'—or the south facing Lord who also happens to be an erudite and wise teacher and preacher.

Again, if we take the other name *Dakshina-Mukha* it would mean 'one who is a personification of the virtues of donation and charity'. The word 'Dakshinaa' means giving away charitably and making selfless donation, while 'Mukha' means 'mouth'. In other words, Lord Shiva has been extremely gracious, benevolent, liberal and magnanimous in giving away whatever he has, and in this particular case he has given away eternal spiritual knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the non-dual reality of the 'self' as a personification of Brahm. Since teaching is done by the 'mouth', hence this donation and charity that he made was through the mouth, entitling him to be called 'Dakshina-Mukhi'.

²Lord Shiva is regarded as the God assigned the duty of bringing about conclusion of creation. In fact, Shiva is another manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, in his role as the concluder of creation just like there is Brahma the creator and Vishnu the care-taker, both being the same Lord in his various roles. The Shiva that is referred to in this Upanishad and the one who ought to be worshipped is not his external form as the ferocious and merciless 'God of death' but the hidden element of Truth and Reality that governs this creation and which acts as the dynamic Principal that works behind the scene to bring about the conclusion of this vast creation, retract it in his own bosom like a father would embrace his offspring to protect it from the impending danger, and then when the time is conducive, to make it re-emerge once again with a new mandate and a fresh lease of life. Obviously, such an entity is known by the name of Brahm in the Upanishads. In his role as the creator, this cosmic Principal is known as Brahma, as the sustainer, nourisher and protector it is known as Vishnu, and as concluder it is called Shiva. These three Gods of the Trinity represent the basic elements of creation from which the entire creation has come into being. In this context, the reader is advised to refer to Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 85-102 which basically describe how the five elements have personified as these three Gods.

³*Shiva Tattva*—The word 'Tattva' means truth, reality, essence, fundamental aspect, the primary and basic element, the real and truthful principle, while the word 'Shiva' stand for a host of eclectic virtues and divine glories exemplified and personified by Lord Shiva, such as the divine and grand virtues of spiritual beauty, auspiciousness, truthfulness, righteousness, nobility, dispassion, detachment, wisdom, knowledge, enlightenment etc.

Since the primary essence and the basic elementary Truth of creation that is absolute, pristine pure, uncorrupted, untainted, immutable, eternal, imperishable and universal, that is auspicious, righteous and noble, is known as Brahm, and since these virtues are

undiluted, untainted and eternally truthful, since they are unchallengeable and irrefutable 'truths and reality' of existence, they are collectively called the 'Shiva Principle'. Lord Shiva is the ultimate Authority and Principal of creation who personifies these virtues.

The word Shiva refers to one is not only beautiful, auspicious, holy and truthful, who is not only most enlightened, wise, self-realised and Brahm-realised, but personify or embody these virtues in his own self. That is why Shiva is the universal teacher and preacher of the great principles and tenets of metaphysics and spirituality because there is no one more competent, more knowledgeable and wiser than him. This is also the reason why he is depicted always in a state of perpetual Samadhi—the state of perpetual meditation and contemplation, because he has tasted the nectar of eternal bliss and happiness that comes with realising the ultimate Truth of existence which fills the spiritual aspirant with an extreme sense of contentedness and ecstasy.

It must be remembered that all Upanishads rely on and unequivocally expound upon one basic philosophy, and it is the tenet of 'Advaitya' or 'non-duality'. They endeavour to establish by their teachings that the 'Tattva', or the fundamental essence behind everything in this living creation, no matter what its external form and quality is and what the context and circumstance are—is basically the one and the same entity that is known as pure cosmic Consciousness. Since the underlying essence is the same and it remains constant, unchanging, immutable, indivisible and universal inspite of the mind-boggling variations in which it is manifested in this visible world, since nothing can exist without this fundamental essence, and since it would outlast all known visible faces of creation that appear to be true on their face but are fundamentally flawed because they come to an end whereas 'truth' should be eternal and imperishable, it is known as 'Tattva', the great essence and fundamental 'truth' behind everything.

So, the Shiva Tattva being talked about here is the ultimate essence or Tattva that is 'Shiva' in nature. That is, the essence that is basically truthful, beautiful, auspicious, holy and divine in nature.

The main aim of all spiritual pursuit and study of the scriptures is to become aware of the supreme and irrefutable Truth that is Absolute in this creation along with the basic principles that define this Absolute Truth and form its eclectic essence. Since the concept of the Absolute Truth is too abstract to be comprehended by the mind, it has been personified as a deity or Deva. What is it? It is the eclectic, esoteric and mystical knowledge and awareness of the cosmic, universal and eternal divine Being who personifies this Truth, and who is the subject matter of all metaphysical research and spiritual practices. This Supreme Being is none other but Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. The knowledge of this Brahm is known as the Shiva Tattva—the auspicious, holy and divine essence and principle that defines and governs the enigmatic and mysterious entity known as Brahm.

It is like the case of the hidden nucleus around which the electrons move in an atom, or the atom itself which is invisible but forms the basic building block around which all the molecules are constructed, and which in turn form the basis of all material things that have come into existence in this world. If we remove the nucleus or the atom, nothing would exist though no one has actually seen either of them.]

6. [Verse nos. 6-8 describe the first of the five Mantras listed in this Upanishad.]

Now the various aspects of the powerful and effective Mantra dedicate to this Dakshina-Mukhi Lord (Shiva) are being enumerated. Its Rishi (the one who had first created or conceptualized it and understood its esoteric and mystical powers and prowess) is Brahma the creator¹; its Chanda (the poetical style in which it is composed) is known as Gayatri²; and its Devta (the patron deity to whom it is dedicated and who is

worshipped through it) is the Lord known as Dakshina-Murti (the form of Shiva that faces south and which is in a teaching mode).

The Mantra is to be used to do 'Anga Nyas'³ (6).

[Note—¹The *Rishi* of a Mantra is the one who had first visualised or conceptualized it, who had first discovered it, who had first composed its hymns and witnessed its powerful might first hand. He tested the mystical powers of this hymn and then taught about it to his disciples for their welfare. He was like a modern day scientist who does long research and arrives at some astounding discovery and tests its truthfulness and effectiveness. Then that discovery is named after him. Verse no. 32 of this Upanishad clearly asserts that it was Brahma who had first worshipped the supreme transcendental Brahm at the beginning of creation with these hymns called Mantras in order to start the process of creation. Hence, he is the Rishi of these Mantras.

²*Gayatri* is a type of poetical composition that has twenty four letters and syllables divided into three steps or stanzas.

³The *Anga Nyas* is a process of pledging utmost faith and conviction on the divine and holy Mantra's supernatural powers and potentials by invoking it and reposing it on the various locations of the body and its vital parts. The word 'Anga' means the body and its various parts, and 'Nyas' means to invoke, deposit, place, keep, repose, trust, pledge, entrust, to keep a thing in mind, etc. This is a ritualistic process in which certain parts of the body are touched and certain Mantras are said. It also means the purification of the individual parts of the body and the installation of the individual letter of the invoked Mantra, complete with its full potentials, at those points. It is like reposting the powerful dynamic forces of creation represented by the Gods of the Mantra on the different designated parts of the body so as to empower these parts with the inherent strength and divine powers possessed by these Gods in a symbolic manner. It also makes the body holy and sanctified because it is now the seat where Divinity is being invoked and placed. Since the Gods cannot be seated on a polluted and unclean place, it obviously follows that the body of a worshipper is made clean and holy in as much as it must be made free from all sorts of sins, perversions and other corrupting influences of this world.

Thus, the process of Anga Nyas makes the body of the worshipper sinless, holy and free from evils that cast their all-enveloping shadow on this world. Anga Nyas is a virtual shield-like body armour that gives protection to the wearer.

The locations on the body where Anga Nyas is done have great metaphysical significance. According to Ramopanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, canto 2, verse no. 43, these ten locations are the following—Brahm-randhra (which is the hair-like slit on the top of the skull), the forehead, the central point of the eyebrows (where the symbolic third eye of wisdom is said to be located), the upper palate, the two earlobes, the heart, the navel and the two thighs = 10 sites.

Primarily there are six sites according to the same Upanishad's verse no. 23 where the primary seed or root words, called the Beej Mantras, are invoked. They are the following—the Brahm-randhra (top of the skull), the central point of the eyebrows, the heart, the navel, and the two thighs.

According to its verse no. 83-85, there are five sites for doing Anga Nyas for a warrior. These are heart, forehead/central point of the eyebrows, the top of the head where the tuft of hair is located and which is the site of the Brahm-randhra, the body armour or shield, and the arms and armaments of the aspirant warrior.

The human body is a microcosm of the cosmos, because according to the genesis of creation, the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all-encompassing and all-inclusive manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, had metamorphosed in the shape of

the human body, and therefore this body is a manifestation of the entire creation including all its Gods and all their astounding potentials.

The creation has been visualised as having three divisions which form the so-called three worlds—viz. the heavens represented by the head of the human body where the Brahm-randhra, forehead and the eyebrows are located; the terrestrial world or the earth symbolised by the heart and the navel; and the nether or lower world by the legs and the two thighs. It must be noted that the two earlobes stand for the two extreme directions of the cosmic globe. So, when the aspirant does Anga Nyas with any Mantra on these specific points, he symbolically purifies these points on his body and empowers them with the mystical and ethereal powers of the powerful forces of Nature which these Mantras embody as mystical formulas encrypting astounding dynamic energy and forces of creation. This is a perception which implies that the ethereal and mystical powers and potentials of the Mantras representing the stupendous forces of Nature that control creation, right from its conception to its development, growth, expansion, sustenance and conclusion, are invoked and established throughout the breadth and length of this visible creation manifested in the form of the body of the aspirant. In other words, the aspirant hopes that he would be empowered with all the glorious virtues and auspicious powers and stupendous potentials and majestic authority vested in the Viraat Purush at the cosmic level.

But at the same time this visualization of the body being a manifestation of the Viraat Purush carries a load of noble responsibility with it. If the worshipper is enlightened and wise enough so as to be doing the Anga Nyas with full understanding of its metaphysical and spiritual import, then he must also realise that he is not an ordinary mortal creature who indulges in the pursuit of worldly pleasures and comforts, or who thinks that success in this material world is the ultimate goal and criterion of success in life. On the other hand, he should endeavour to live a life of exemplary sacrifice and service, devoting his time on researching the ultimate Truth of his own self as well as the rest of creation; he must endeavour to fine out the way to free himself from the endless cycle of birth and death, and ensure that he gets final emancipation and salvation in this very life itself. He must aim and find the source that would give him eternal peace and happiness as well as contentedness and bliss of fulfillment. Otherwise he would be wasting his precious time and energy in imposterism and meaningless perfunctory rituals.]

7. Now the *first Mantra* is being said—In the very beginning the word ‘OM’ (a word used both as a salutation as well as a reference to the supreme Brahm who is actually meant to be worshipped through the following Mantra) is pronounced. This is followed sequentially by the following words, ‘Namaha’, then ‘Bhagwate’, then ‘Dakshina’, then ‘Murtaye’, then ‘Mahyam’ which is singular of the fourth aspect of the Sanskrit word Asmad meaning the Supreme Being or supreme Purush or Brahm, then the words ‘Medham Pragayam’. After that, the Sanskrit letter ‘Pra’ (as in *Pray*) is said, followed by the letter the letter ‘Ya’ (as in *yearn*), both standing for the wind element, and then the combined word ‘CChha’ (consisting half letter ‘Cha’ as in *chain* or *charm*, joined to the full letter ‘Chha’ as in *catch* it). Finally, the word for making offerings to the fire sacrifice and meant for the deity worshipped, i.e. the word ‘Swaha’, is said.

This results in the construction of a twenty four lettered Mantra dedicated to Manu (the great original and primary God from whom the rest of the humans were born, a reference to the Viraat Purush who manifested himself as the visible creation) (7).

[Note—Thus, the twenty four lettered Mantra as outlined in this verse and dedicated to Lord Shiva is the following—‘OM Namoha Bhagwate Dakshina Murtaye Mahyam

Medham Pragyam Prayacchha Swaha'. This Mantra briefly means 'OM salutations! I bow before the south facing and most revered and wise Lord called Dakshin Mukhi who is an ultimate epitome and personification of the highest quality of intelligence, erudition, divine wisdom and knowledge in this creation. I offer this offering to you; I submit myself before you by saying 'Sawaha'.

It must be noted that the word Swaha is usually pronounced while making offerings to the fire pit of the fire sacrifice, but more broadly it means submission, humility and offering the best that one has to the chosen deity. In the present case since no external fire sacrifice is apparently being done and the worshipper is meditating upon one or the other forms of Lord Shiva while doing a symbolic form of sacrifice involving his own body where the Mantras are established and their dynamic cosmic esoteric powers are reposted, the implied meaning is to offer one's own self with the greatest of reverence and humility to the Lord.]

8. Next, the Dhayan, or the process of meditating upon this eclectic and divine form of the Lord Dakshina-Mukhi¹, is being narrated—I offer my prayers to Lord Dakshina-Mukhi (i.e. Lord Shiva) who is gloriously white complexioned like the pure crystal and silver. His hands are held in the Gyan Mudra (i.e. in the posture adopted while giving divine knowledge and wisdom to his devotees) which blesses the recipient with the truthful and the best form of knowledge of the essence of everything, the eclectic and divine knowledge which is the highest form of wisdom that can be had, and which acts like an elixir of eternal bliss and felicity called Amrit. He holds an Aksha Mala (a prayer rosary) made of pearls. [The symbolism of pearls should be noted here. Pearls are metaphors for purity and the best of anything; they are symbols of holiness, divinity and piousness. Lord Shiva personifies all these qualities.]

He has three eyes. [There are two conventional eyes and the third eye symbolic of his great insight into the most secret of knowledge and the ability to see things past their physical appearances. It stands for the highest level of erudition, sagacity, wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment. Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 93, 100.]

His broad forehead gives shelter to the Moon God. [This moon is present in a crescent shape indicating the various Kalaas or divine aspects of the Lord. It is believed that there are sixteen divine qualities called Kalaas in a man that the sixteen phases of the moon symbolises, and its location on the forehead shows that these qualities adorn Lord Shiva permanently. Refer also Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 100.]²

Serpents are wrapped round his waist as girdles³. He is adorned by countless divine ornaments. [These ornaments are not physical ornaments made of jewels etc. but the many glorious virtues that adorn the Lord as has been pointed out in reference to the presence of the moon on his head. Besides these virtues, there are umpteen numbers of divine virtues that Shiva possesses as the Supreme Being personified.] (8).

[Note—¹The *Dakshina-Murti* Lord Shiva is a benign form of Shiva in his teaching mode. The word Shiva stands for such divine qualities as auspiciousness, purity, beauty, piety, truth, renunciation, dispassion towards and detachment from all material things, highest level of enlightenment, knowledge, wisdom and erudition etc. Lord Shiva personifies all of them at once. He has been depicted in the scriptures as having four hands—two at the front and two behind. These are symbolic only and not any anomalous growth on the body.

In iconography, Lord Shiva has been depicted in various forms based on this Upanishad. One of his forms, the *first version*, is being referred to here. This form has the

two hands in the front are held in the following way—the right one is in Gyan Mudra or the posture of giving knowledge, and the left one is in Vara Mudra or the posture that indicates his granting boons and giving gifts. The gift in this case is the gift of knowledge and wisdom. The two hands at the back of these front hands are holding a rosary in the right hand, and the fire in the left hand.

Ichnographically, he is shown sitting on a pedestal with his left leg resting on the thighs of the right leg which rests on a reclining figure of personified ignorance and delusion, called Apasmaara Purush.

²The *Moon* present on Shiva's forehead stands for the various eclectic qualities called Kalaas that he possesses and which adorn him like the moon. Symbolically, the devotee is advised to follow the example of his chosen deity Lord Shiva and note the symbolism of the Moon on his head. These eclectic qualities should be as prominent as the moon on the head of Shiva and they should form an integral part of the character of the devotee if he wishes to place himself in the position of being called a sincere follower and worshipper of Lord Shiva. Now let us have a glimpse of these Kalaas. They are the various eclectic qualities or attributes that an exalted man should possess, and briefly they are the following—(i) Shraddha (faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (wind, air element), (v) Tej (energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) 'Prithivi' (earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (austerity and penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self) (xiii) Mantra (the ability to give good advise, the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (worldly interactions and behaviours), and (xvi) Naam (good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory).

Reference should be made to the Chandogya Upanishad, 6/7/1-6 of Sam Veda tradition in this context.

³The coiled *serpents* around his body indicate the fact that he constantly reminds himself of imminent death because serpents are very poisonous and symbolise immediate death. This helps him to remain focused on his spiritual aim of self-realisation instead of being attracted by the material charms of this material world of sense objects and getting deluded by them. The serpents also signify that Shiva is the Lord of death; he is death personified. Since he is able to wrap the serpents around his body and they cannot harm him, it indicates the fact that he has conquered death. That is why he is called 'Mrityunjay', the conqueror of death.

Again, the coiled serpents represent the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine which when activated can entitle the spiritual aspirant to experience a burst of stupendous spiritual energy which provides him a glimpse of his own divine powers as well as the powers of the cosmic Consciousness present inside his bosom as his Atma. This Kundalini is activated by doing numerous Yoga exercises as described in the Upanishads on the subject of Yoga.

The coiled serpents may also represent cycles of time in the macrocosm and the basic energy of life in the microcosm in the form of sexual energy.

These reptiles are very ferocious, dangerous, poisonous, and a symbol of male potency. The symbolism is that Shiva is a very potent God who can be extremely ruthless and unforgiving towards sinful creatures. He has exercised extreme self control and has 'girdled' or readied himself in preparation for enduring the greatest of hardships and sufferance for self-realisation as well as to provide the world with liberation and deliverance. The serpents warn his enemies not to fool around with him. That is also why he has fire in one of his hands. This fire signifies his ability to reduce to ashes the entire physical world consisting of falsehood and sins as well as eliminate all impurities, imperfections, faults and shortcomings that cripple the creature's spiritual well being.

The Yogtattva Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 92-94 say that Shiva is a personification of the fire element and is its patron deity. It is no wonder then that he is surrounded by 'fire-spitting' serpents as a symbolism of this fact.]

9. The *second Mantra* of nine letters is now being said. It should be used to do Nyas (i.e. it should be used to invoke the divine powers and stupendous glories of the chosen deity, in this case Lord Dakshina-Murti). To start with, the ethereal word OM is said with a Visarga at its end. [The Visarga is equivalent to the English colon mark “ : ”]. It is followed by the five lettered word for the deity, i.e. the word 'Dakshina Murti' is said with a Visarga at its end. This is to be followed with the word 'Ataram'.

This is the nine letter Mantra¹ of the great Manu (the supreme Lord from whom the humans and all other creatures have come into being) (9).

[Note—The nine letter Mantra is—“OM Dakshinamurtir-ataram”. Briefly it means 'OM salutations! Lord Dakshina-Mukhi (Shiva) is the one who can provide liberation and deliverance to the Atma or soul'.

The Mantra which has nine letters is called *Aasuri Jagati Chanda* or *Aasuri Ekpadaa Jagati Chanda*. It is also called *Yaajushi Brihati* + (*Swaraat Brahmi Anushtup* + *Swaraat Brahmi Ushnik*) *Chanda*.]

10. Now, the Dhyana or doing meditation on the form of this Dakshina-Mukhi Lord is being described—'One (front) hand of the Lord is held in Abhay Mudra (the posture of giving blessings and granting the boon of fearlessness, possibly from death and its horrors). The other hand rests on his thighs. The other two hands (at the back of the front hands) hold an axe and an antelope¹.

He is sitting comfortably under the Vat tree (i.e. the Indian fig tree or the Banyan tree). Serpents are wrapped around his waist. The moon of the second night adorns his matted lock of hairs on his head.

His complexion is white as milk. He has three eyes and is surrounded by exalted sages and seers such as Shuk (the sage who was in the body of a parrot and was the son of the legendary sage Veda Vyas, the classifier of the Vedas).

I reverentially bow before Lord Shiva and meditate upon his divine form as narrated above. Let him purify my mind and thought, and let him bless me with divine wisdom and knowledge' (10).

[Note—¹As has been said in note to verse no. 8 above, iconography has depicted Lord Shiva in different forms based on this Upanishad. The present form is Shiva's *second form* which is called Dakshina-Murti. In this form he has four hands—two in the front two behind them. The right front hand is in Abhay Mudra to grant fearlessness. The left hand rests on the thighs. The rear two hands hold an axe in the right hand and an antelope in the left hand. The axe is indicative of his readiness to slay the evil and sinful ones, and the antelope symbolises wildness in character that is about to be sacrificed by the axe.]

11-12. Now, the Nyas of the *third Mantra* is done. Brahma is the Rishi of this Mantra. The word 'OM' is said first followed by the words 'Blumm' and 'Namaha'. Then the following words are said sequentially—the seed or root letter for Maya (delusion creating powers of Brahm; Mother Nature) which is 'Hrim', then the seed or root letter for voice or the faculty of speech which is 'Aiyang' (the ninth Sanskrit vowel 'Aiy' as in My or dye with a dot on top; this 'dot' produces a nasal sound of 'ang' as in *rang* or *rung* or of 'um' as in *sum*). This is followed by the word for the deity being worshipped, i.e. 'Dakshin' and 'Murtaye'. Then the words 'Gyanam' and 'Dehi' are said. Finally, the word 'Swaha' is pronounced.

This creates a Manu Mantra of eighteen letters¹. The worshipper should repeat this eclectic and divine Mantra with due diligence, faith and sincerity. Amongst all the Mantras, this is said to be most secret, esoteric and mystical (11-12).

[Note—¹The complete Mantra thus becomes—"OM Blumm Namō Hrim Aiyang Dakshina Murtaye Gyanam Dehi Swaha". Briefly it means—"OM salutations! I bow most reverentially to the Lord called Dakshin Murti (Shiva) who is the Lord possessed of the astounding powers of Maya and the faculty of speech. I beg you to give me eclectic knowledge, divine wisdom and highest level of erudition and enlightenment. I offer myself in all humility to you; I submit myself to you; Swaha".

The Chanda having eighteen letters is called *Saamni Brihati Chanda*. It is usually of two types—(a) one in which the verse has a total of 18 letters arranged in three lines of 6 letters each—6 + 6 + 6 = 18 letters in all, (b) one in which there are only two lines of 9 letters each—9 + 9 = 18 letters in all. The latter version is called *Saamni Dwipada Brihati Chanda*.

It is called Manu because it is dedicated to the primary Being from whom the rest of creation has evolved.]

13. [This verse describes the process of doing Dhyān or meditation on the form of Dakshina-Murti Shiva to whom prayer was offered in verse no. 11-12.]

His body is coloured white due to the ash of the sacrificial fire smeared all over it. He bears the crescent moon on his head. One of his hands is in Gyan Mudra (the posture of giving knowledge) while the other three hold a Rudraksha Mala (a rosary of Rudraksha beads or the seeds of the *eleocarpus ganitrus*), the Indian lute and a book¹. He is adorned by the one-piece cloth worn by ascetics (the loin cloth).

He is seated on the 'Vyas Peeth', the seat where the preacher or teacher usually sits during the course of giving a discourse. [This seat is usually higher than the rest of the place where the disciples sit around the teacher.] He is surrounded by exalted sages and seers who have come to hear his discourses. He is in a cheerful and pleasant mood. He is adorned by serpents. He wraps the skin of the tiger around himself (like the forest-dwelling ascetics and hermits usually do).

Let that Dakshina-Murti Lord always protect me, give shelter to me and provide solace and succour to me (13).

[Note—¹As has been pointed out earlier in verse nos. 8 and 10, Shiva has been depicted in different forms. The present version is his *third form*. In this version, the Dakshin Mukhi Shiva has four symbolic arms as well. The front right one is in *Gyan Mudra*—a posture in which the palm is open and held at right angle to the wrist, the thumb and the first finger form a ring and the rest of the finger are held erect and touch each other. The *rosary of Rudraksha* is very dear to Shiva as this particular tree is said to have originated

from the tear drops of Shiva while he was meditating. There is an Upanishad called Rudraksha Jabalo-panishad belonging to the Sam Veda tradition dedicated to this theme. The *Indian lute* is the musical instrument associated with Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge, wisdom, speech and intelligence. Holding of this instrument signifies that Shiva is the Lord of knowledge and wisdom of the best quality. The *book* of course is an obvious symbol of knowledge, especially of the scriptures.]

14-15. Now Nyas should be done with the *fourth Mantra*. The Mantra is constructed as follows—in the beginning the divine word ‘OM’ is pronounced. This is followed sequentially by the seed or root letter for Maya, i.e. ‘Hrim’, then by the seed or root letter for Sri (worldly prosperity and wealth, majesty and magnificence represented by Goddess Laxmi), which is ‘Sring’ (as in *string*). This is to be followed by the word ‘Saamba-Shivaaye’ and ‘Tubhyam’. Finally, the offering word ‘Swaha’ is said. This is the twelve lettered Manu Mantra¹ of Shiva.

Now Dhyan, i.e. meditation on the form of Dakshina-Mukhi Lord Shiva to whom this Mantra is dedicated is being narrated—He is holding a Veena (Indian lute), a book and the ‘Aksha Mala’ (the prayer rosary) in his (three) hands, while one hand (i.e. the fourth one) is held in ‘Abhaye Mudra’ (the posture which grants fearlessness to the worshipper)².

The colour of his throat looks charming with its dark bluish hue which resembles the dark clouds of the rainy season³.

The Lord is the most exalted and the most excellent of the Gods. The king of serpents adorns his waist area (because it wraps itself around it like a girdle). He is sitting under a Vat Tree (the Indian fig or Banyan tree). He is surrounded and served by sages and seers such as Shuk etc. I offer my humble prayers to such a Lord (14-15).

[Note—¹The twelve letter Mantra is called *Aasuri Brihati Chanda*. The composite Mantra is as follows—“OM Hrim Sring Saamba-Shivaaye Tubhyam Swaha”. Its meaning in brief is as follows—‘OM salutations! Lord Shiva is the one who grants the boon of the powerful powers possessed by the combined forces of Maya as well as Sri to his devotees (i.e. they become entitle to possess all the worldly pomp and pageantry, all the material comforts and pleasures that money and prosperity can buy and which is befitting of an emperor). He is eternally cheerfully and benevolent. I submit myself reverentially to you oh Lord; Swaha’.

²This is the *fourth form* of Shiva. The rest of the hand positions are the same as in verse no. 13, except the *Abhaye Mudra*—this is the forgiving and fearlessness assuring posture in which palm is held at right angles to the wrist and held in an open position with the thumb and the four fingers held erect. The prayer rosary called *Aksha Maala* has an entire Upanishad dedicated to it, and it is called ‘Aksha-maliko-panishad. It belongs to the Rig Veda tradition.

³The simile is remarkable. The rain-bearing dark clouds of the monsoon season brings immense amount of cheer and merry-making in the Indian sub-continent because they are the harbingers of life-sustaining rains on which agriculture, prosperity, a vibrant plant and animal life as well as general well being and resultant happiness and joys of life depend. So the darkness is not something to be afraid of, but an occasion to welcome, rejoice and exult. The dark throat of Shiva was caused because he had drunk the Halaahal poison, the most lethal and strongest of poisons to emerge during the legendary churning of the ocean by the demons and the gods in search of the elixir of eternal life called Amrit. No one was ready to risk his life by drinking it, but the Lord was so fearless and powerful as well as magnanimous and charitable that he said the name of his own Lord,

who happens to be Lord Ram, and gulped it. The poison stayed in his throat, because if it had entered the stomach then the entire creation would have been scorched to death as it is believed that the Lord harbours everything in his own sac-like abdomen.

The bluish hue created by this poison resembles the colour of the sky, and it is said in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 98-102, that Shiva also is the patron deity of the sky element. The symbolism is very obvious and stark. This also explains why the 'sky' appears to be blue tinged—because it is a manifestation of Lord Shiva in his vast form that is visible and omnipresent but unreachable and beyond measure at the same time. The remarkable thing about this form is its all-inclusive nature because everything that exists in this creation lives within the space of the sky and not beyond it. It ought to be remembered here that the word 'sky' is not restricted to the blue parabolic covering that we see from the earth but includes the far reaches of the infinite, measureless and fathomless depths of the cosmos.]

16-17. Now the *fifth Mantra* is being described. The Rishi of this Mantra (i.e. the one who had first created the Mantra) is Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation. The composition style is called Anushtup Chanda¹. Its Devta (the patron deity to whom it is dedicated) is Lord Dakshina-Mukhi (i.e. the south facing Lord Shiva).

The Nyas is done with this Mantra. [That is, various parts of the body are touched by the fingers while saying the Mantra and the mystical powers of it are established or deposited there.]

The Mantra is constructed as follows—at the beginning, the divine word 'OM' is said. Then the words 'Namo Bhagwate Tubhyam' are said, followed by the word 'Vatmool'. This is followed by 'Vaasine', then 'Vaagishaaye', then 'Mahaa Gyan Daayane', and finally 'Maayine'. The Mantra should be wound up by saying the word 'Namaha'² (16-17).

[Note—¹The *Anushtup Chanda* is a verse having thirty two letters.

²The composite Mantra becomes—"OM Namo Bhagwate Tubhayam Vatmoolvaasine Vaagishaaye Maahaa-gyaan-daayine Maayine Namaha". Briefly, this Mantra means as follows—'OM salutations! I bow reverentially to you who is the Lord residing under the Vat Tree (i.e. the Indian fig or Banyan tree), who is an expert orator and master of the faculty of speech, and who is the great giver of eclectic knowledge, divine wisdom and highest enlightenment to me. I bow before him'.]

18-20. This Mantra composed in the style of an Anushtup Chanda is the best amongst its class of Mantras and is therefore called 'Mantra Raaj', i.e. the king of Mantras.

Now, Dhyan (meditation) of the form of Shiva to whom this Mantra is dedicated is being described. 'The Lord has one hand in the Abhaye Mudra (as described in verse no. 14-15), while his other hands hold the book, the fire, and the serpents that are as ferocious as the fire'¹.

He has a cheerful and pleasant face and disposition. He is adorned by a garland of pearls. The crescent moon forms his crown. He is the one who removes the darkness caused by ignorance and delusions.

He cannot be known and understood by words and use of the faculty of speech. [In other words, no one can describe him and his divine glories to others in words so as to make them grasp the esoteric secrets of the Lord; he is beyond the reach and purview of words and the ability of the faculty of speech.]

He is the Adi Purush (the primeval, primary and most ancient supreme Lord from whom the rest of the creation has emerged). He belongs to all (i.e. he is not sectarian or bigot in his approach, for as a benevolent and benign Lord of the creation, he treats every unit of creation equally and with equanimity, without any distinction based on birth, class, creed, colour or beliefs. The entire creation is like his offspring; everyone has equal right over him because he is the Father of all).

He resides under the Vat Tree (the Indian fig or Banyan tree)².

We meditate upon and reverentially remember the Lord who is the supreme Guru, or the most exalted moral preceptor and the most enlightened and wise teacher for the whole world. We meditate upon and reverentially remember the Lord for the fulfillment of our hopes, aspirations and desires’.

Then the worshipper should become silent and contemplate upon his pure self with this thought—‘I am that Lord myself’. [This eclectic vision of the ‘self’ is the climax of meditation on the essence of the cosmic non-dual supreme entity in Nature known as the pure Consciousness which is the essence of Shiva. It is the supreme transcendental Truth of creation known as Brahm personified in the form of Shiva as well as the pure ‘self’ of the worshipper as his Atma. It is the essential teaching of Upanishads which lay stress repeatedly on the non-dual nature of the supreme Truth.]

Having a firm, steady and unwavering faith in the truth of this eclectic and axiomatic maxim (that the supreme Shiva representing Brahm is none other than me in my true form as the pure conscious Atma), being fully and unequivocally convinced of its truthfulness, having no doubts about its veracity and irrefutability, and having sincere and deep devotion for this Divinity till the time of one’s death (i.e. through the life), is known as true ‘Nishtha’ (18-20).

[Note—¹Iconographically, this form of the Lord, the Dakshina-Mukhi Lord Shiva, is the *fifth form* of Shiva. It depicts him as holding his right front hand in the Abhaye Mudra, the book is held in the left front hand, the fire in the right back hand, and the serpent in the left back hand.

²In earlier times, wise and learned, self-realised and enlightened sages, seers, ascetics and hermits used to live under such trees as a mark of their total abandonment of worldly life and its comforts. Disciples used to assemble around him and great spiritual and metaphysical discourses were held here under the tree.]

21. To regard the different Manu Mantras (as described above) as referring to one single non-dual divine entity which is supreme and transcendental, and to constantly and persistently repeat these Mantras (to remind one of the aforesaid fact should one forget about it under the influence of this world of delusions and ignorance), i.e. doing Japa with those Mantras, is the way or medium or source known as ‘Saadhan’ by which Gyan (true knowledge, divine wisdom, highest erudition and holistic enlightenment) can be obtained (21).

22. To be completely focused on that truthful, supreme and transcendental Divinity with full devotion and concentration of the mind, intellect and heart, paying full and undiverted attention on it, is called the instrument or ‘Upkaran’ by which it can be accessed or attained. In other words, total surrender and single-minded pursuit of one’s spiritual objective in life is the only instrument or vehicle which can deliver the required results to him (22).

23. To repeatedly and diligently exercise strict restraint on the wayward tendencies of the body and its sense organs, and instead divert their efforts and energy towards things having an eclectic, divine, holy, auspicious and righteous dimension, is called 'Bali' or making of sacrifices. [To make the body and organs suffer by forcing them to give up their indulgent ways of self gratification and yearning for the pleasures and comforts of the world and its material sense objects, and sacrificing them on the altar of spiritualism and self-realisation is indeed the greatest sacrifice that a spiritual aspirant can ever hope to make.] (23).

24. To strike a perfect balance and establish a perfect harmony and equanimity of the three Gunas (i.e. the Sata, Raja and Tama Gunas inherent in the creature is varying ratios that determine his individual character and personality as well as his mental setup and demeanours) is like Kaal or the death-knell of variables and dichotomies that create innumerable distortions, confusions and perplexities that occur in the world in its three dimensions of time (such as the past, the present and the future) (24).

[Note—The varying ratio of the three basic qualities of Sata, Raja and Tama in a person determine his individuality, and since the chances of these qualities mixing with each other is phenomenally large, we have countless types of men with no two individuals having everything in common. But suppose a situation is brought about when these three Gunas neutralise each other, as the case was before the beginning of creation when they were present in Brahm but lay in a neutral state, it would result in the elimination of all disparities and differences seen in this world. That is, the state of non-duality, homogeneity and uniformity would be reached. All variations and changes would cease to matter—what is now would also be in the future, and it was the same in the past. This is the basis of the theory of non-duality, i.e. that what was then is present now and would be there in the future and beyond. Since only 'truth' does not change, the entity targeted by this Upanishad is this ultimate 'absolute truth' which it prefers to call the 'Shiva Tattva'. Refer to verse nos. 2-5 and their accompanying note, as well as to verse no. 30 in this context.]

25. The final destination of all meditative and contemplative efforts made by the ascetic to access the supreme Truth is the subtle heart said to be like a divine lotus having a twelve petals. Since it is here the sublime Atma lives in the bliss sheath, it is the abode which provides eternal peace and tranquility (25).

26. Those devoted sages and seers once again asked the exalted sage Maarkandey, 'How is that eclectic divine entity manifested? What is its form? Who worships it?' (26).

27. He (Maarkandey) replied, 'It is the seen or visualised in the light of enlightenment arising from a lamp of Gyan (knowledge, wisdom and erudition) which is full of oil representing Vairagya (the virtues of renunciation and dispassion towards this world of material sense objects and sensual pleasures), whose wick represents Bhakti (total and sincere devotion, faith, surrender and submission), and whose light is enlightenment and self-realisation. When this light is shown, the all-pervading and all-encompassing, the omnipresent supreme transcendental Consciousness known as the Truth and the auspicious Divinity is seen in the form of the self-illuminated sublime Atma present in the aforesaid lotus-like pure subtle heart (27).

28-29. When the darkness of Agyan (ignorance and delusions) is removed by the medium of the light of shown by Gyan (truthful knowledge and wisdom), Bhakti (devotion and faith) and Vairagya (dispassion and detachment from falsehood and deluding world)—it is only then that the lamp of self-realisation springs to life on its own. That is, the self-illuminated Atma begins to show its divine presence.

One should use one's Gyan (knowledge and wisdom) as the upper part of the Arani¹ which is used as a rubbing rod to vigorously arouse Vairagya (the grand virtues of dispassion and detachment) which acts as the lower end of the Arani to produce the fire of enlightenment and total dispassion or non-involvement with things that are not real and true so that this 'light' can remove the darkness of Moha and Agyan (delusions and ignorance) that act as impediments or obstacles in the awareness of the supreme Tattva, i.e. in the realisation of the ultimate reality about the pure consciousness which is the true 'self'. These two—Moha and Agyan—are equivalent to death of the creature because they create extreme fear and confusion for him.

That supreme transcendental Tattva (essence and fundamental truth) is realizable only by the means of constantly pursuing the path of Gyan and Vairagya as well as doing Yoga (meditation and contemplation). [Like in the field of modern science, research and diligence is to be continuous process and not an ad-hoc approach. Like the case when remains healthy if one eats a balanced diet for the whole of his life and not gorge upon food once and then fast for a long time to compensate for it, meditation and contemplation, learning and experimenting should be a continuous process to fine tune one's efforts and have better and finer experiences of spiritualism through life.]² (28-29).

[Note—¹The *Arani* consists of two pieces of wood used to self-produce the fire during fire sacrifices by vigorously rubbing them against one another. The lower piece is rectangular in shape with a hole or indentation in the middle; it is made of a softer form of wood, usually of the Ashvattha tree (*Ficus religiosa*). It is called the lower Arani or the 'Adharaani' and is likened to the female uterus. The upper piece of wood is in the form of a churning or rubbing rod made of hard wood, usually Shami tree (*Acacia suma*), and it is called 'Uttararaani'. It is equivalent to the male phallus. The upper piece is inserted in the hole of the lower piece and vigorously turned with the help of a long string or cord. This rubbing generates heat and results in the creation of fire at the point of friction. This fire is the offspring of this union of the cosmic male and female.

In the present example, the upper part of the Arani which is vigorously turned is the Gyan, while the lower part is represented by Vairagya. The idea is that with proper use of Gyan or truthful knowledge, an aspirant can ignite the fire of renunciation and detachment from this world and its material charms, and this light of enlightenment would in its wake remove the darkness of delusions that they have cast upon him.

The analogy of the Arani has been cited in a number of Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda, e.g. Kathwalli Upanishad, Canto 2, Valli 1, verse no. 8; Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 18; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse no. 11; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 14-15, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 22.

²The same idea has been expounded in Yogatattva Upanishad, verse nos. 14-18 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

30. Not to think of and contemplate on the supreme Truth is equivalent to the fetter that shackles the creature to this world. [This is because the mind cannot stay quiet, and neither can the organs remain idle. So if their energy and restlessness is not directed or

channalised properly to something spiritually better and constructive, they would automatically and naturally gravitate or swerve towards their natural habitat, which in this case is this material world of delusions and artificiality, a world full of sense objects that keep the creature trapped in their snare by their magical charms, in an instinctive manner. This happens due to ignorance about the truth and reality of existence. The creature erroneously and out of ignorance thinks that the pleasures and comforts of the world are for real as much as the fallacious conception that he has about the gross and perishable body as being his 'true self' instead of the Atma. Falsehood and deception are like fetters that tie the creature's soul to this world of birth and death because he would be entangled in its vice-like grip. He would be under the impression that the deeds done by the body are being done by 'him'—and that therefore he is entitled to reap the fruits of such deeds. He forget in the process that what he considers as 'him' is not the 'real self' of his but only a temporary dwelling in as much as the 'real self' is the pure consciousness called the Atma that merely resides in this gross body and is not involved in any of the deeds done by the latter. This Atma is eternal and imperishable as opposed to the body, and therefore all the miseries to which the creature is subjected to in this world are actually limited to the body and do not affect the Atma. This Atma never dies or takes birth, and the quagmire in which it has found itself in the present is due to its ignorance about this fundamental Truth of existence. Delusions, ignorance and their attendant hallucinations, vexations, perplexities, miseries and torments are tantamount to tying the creature in fetters because a bonded man is never at peace with himself no matter what material comforts he might be enjoying.]

Those who are tied to this fetter are the ones who are tormented and scared by the notion of duality or Dvaita in this world. [They are utterly confused as to what is true and what is false. They are not certain if the world they see and believe in is true or not, and whether the Atma actually exists. They are also not sure what kind of Mukti, or liberation and deliverance of the soul or Atma is known as the 'final Mukti' or the Kaivalya Mukti. They toss around and hop between theories and philosophies, never finding any firm ground to rest and have everlasting peace.]

When one becomes aware of the fact that one's 'true self' is the pure consciousness and a personification of the supreme Truth of existence called the 'Shiva Tattva', that they are one and the same, it is then that he finds freedom from all sorts of fears and consternations. That is, when a wise and self-realised person realises that his 'self' is the universally conscious Atma which is the microcosmic counterpart of the macrocosmic Consciousness called Brahm, he feels a sense of great spiritual achievement as he would then have found or discovered the greatest of spiritual and metaphysical Truths in existence.

This eclectic knowledge and enlightenment steadies the spiritual aspirant by helping him focus on his own 'self', in his own Atma, which is the truthful essence known as cosmic Consciousness that is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm or the 'Shiva Tattva' (30).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 4-5, 24, 28-29 in this context.]

31. To impart eclectic knowledge and divine wisdom to the eager disciple which would entitle and enable him to know about the supreme transcendental non-dual Truth of existence known as Brahm and become self-realised himself like his enlightened teacher is the best form of donation and charity that can be made by a wise, self-realised and

enlightened preacher and teacher. Hence, it is the real and true form of 'Dakshina', meaning 'donation, charity and gift given to someone as a matter of religious duty'. [In other words, Dakshina is the selfless imparting of knowledge that is eclectic, auspicious, divine and complete in every form and would help the spiritual aspirant overcome the dark shadow of ignorance and its attendant delusions in order to see the 'light' of truth and reality at the other end of the dark-tunnel like world. This would fill him with new hope and lighten up the dark days of his life full of miseries and worries regarding his long-term fate and welfare. This is the greatest gift that the wise teacher can give to the disciple or an eager student. This 'giving of Dakshina' involves sharpening the aspirant's intellect and inculcating in it the habit and ability to be able to be incisive, discriminating and wise so that this intellect can penetrate deep into and unravel the greatest of esoteric secrets pertaining to the supreme transcendental Truth of existence known as the cosmic Consciousness. This knowledge and ability can enlighten the spiritual aspirant about his own 'self' as well as the truth of the surrounding world around him. This is the best and the purest form of Dakshina that can be given. Showing of 'light' and removing of 'darkness' is the most treasured gift that can be given and received by anyone.]

To become aware of that Brahm, to know who or what that Brahm is so that one is able to witness its presence and recognise it, one has to attentively listen to eclectic teachings pertaining to that Brahm, because it is only through hearing and listening about something from someone who has a first hand knowledge of it that one comes to know and learn about anything at all. Since teaching and explanation as well as answering of relevant questions to remove all doubts and confusions can be done only by the medium of the mouth, the latter is regarded as the Mukha or the instrument that helps one to know about Brahm. It is the virtual 'face' or 'mouth' of Brahm.

Since Lord Shiva is such a self-and-Brahm realised teacher as enumerated in this Upanishad, and since he is the one who has taught about the supreme transcendental cosmic Truth that is absolute and real to sages and seers, he is known as 'Dakshina-Mukha' Shiva (30).

32. At the beginning of creation, the grandfather of creation known as Prajapati Brahma had worshipped this Supreme Being (by using the hymns called Mantras as enumerated in this Upanishad above) to empower himself to initiate the process of creation. It was due to this worship that he got sufficient energy and strength to go about the arduous task of creation and fulfill his ambition of creating this world. This made him fulfilled and happy because he was successful in his desires. That is why Prajapati Brahma is deemed to be the Supreme Being's original worshipper¹ (32).

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 6 and 12 where it is said that Brahm is the Rishi of the Mantra dedicated to the Dakshina Mukhi Lord. The Rishi is the person who first visualises or conceptualizes the Mantra, then composes a particular hymn which is to be called the Mantra, and then preaches it to others or reveals this secret to them. Thus he becomes the Mantra's first exponent, teacher and preacher.]

33. Those who read about this most secret, mystical and esoteric knowledge pertaining to the essence and truth of Shiva, called the 'Shiva Tattva', are freed from all sins, taints, blemishes, faults, impurities, shortcomings, imperfections and other demeaning and demoting qualities that cast a dark shadow over them.

Those who study it deeply and grasp its essence are able to obtain the ultimate form of liberation and deliverance for their soul that is called ‘Kaivalya’, or the form of emancipation and salvation that is only one of its kind. It is the final liberation and deliverance of the soul so much so that it does not have to take a birth again. It’s the final ‘dissolution’.

This is what this Upanishad asserts; this is the great spiritual teaching of this Upanishad. Amen! (33).

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3.3 Krishna Yajur Veda tradition’s Rudra Hridaya Upanishad—

This Upanishad is very significant in the sense that it establishes the principle that Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, and Lord Shiva the concluder of creation are one and the same entity. It further affirms that Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder are also the same divine Supreme Being in his different roles. In other words, all the three gods of the Trinity, and for that matter all other forms of different Gods and Goddesses representing the various aspects of Divinity and forces of Nature are nothing but the same Supreme Being known as Brahm in each of those forms, and playing different roles in creation. Therefore, since the term ‘Brahm’ includes everything in existence, it naturally follows that even the seemingly opposing and inimical forces or aspects of creation such as the sun and the moon, the former signifying the boiling cauldron of fire that provides heat, energy and light to the creation while the latter is the soothing elixir which is cool and balm-like, also are Brahm personified; they represent a personified form of these two apparently virtues of the Supreme Being. And to extend this argument further, we can safely affirm that even the Jiva, the living being, is also Brahm in his basic and truthful form. This sets at rest once and for all the eternal dichotomy and the concept of duality that has existed from time immemorial about the separate existence of the Supreme Being from the rest of the creation.

The name of this Upanishad is derived by joining the two words ‘Rudra’ and ‘Hridaya’. The word Rudra is one of the main names of Lord Shiva, and the word Hridaya means heart. Thus the composite word ‘Rudra Hridaya’ implies the Upanishad that teaches the fundamental principles behind the concept of Shiva.

It was expounded in the form of a dialogue between sages Veda Vyas, the legendary classifier of the four Vedas and narrator of the Purans and Mahabharat, and his son Shukdeo, the sage having the body of a parrot. When Shukdeo asked his father who was the most exalted amongst the Gods, the answer was ‘Rudra’, i.e. Shiva. Thereafter, the magnificent knowledge that Rudra and Vishnu are one, the three forms of Rudra to indicate the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva), its reflection in the three forms that the Atma symbolically assumes (as the Jiva, Parmatma and Atma), and the fact that one is spiritually liberated when one acquires this supreme transcendental knowledge is elucidated in detail.

The Upanishad extols the greatness of the tenet of ‘non-duality’ and uniformity of creation expounded upon and espoused in the philosophy of Advaitya Vedanta. It stresses

that true overcoming of spiritual torments and sorrows is possible only by having respect for, firm faith in and allegiance to the eclectic ‘truth’ as propounded by this philosophy of oneness of the ‘soul’ called the Atma of the individual creature with the supreme Brahm who is the transcendental Atma of this creation. This conviction would at one go remove all artificial dichotomies and delusory perceptions that cause so much consternation and perplexities for the soul, thereby giving it eternal rest and peace.

Verse nos. 1-9 is an exposition on the oneness of all forms that the Supreme Lord had taken in order to carry on with the varying needs and demands of this creation which is his own creation; verse nos. 10-12 describe the three hypothetical forms in which the Atma has been classified for the purpose of understanding, while its divine nature has been outlined in verse nos. 31-33. The two classes in which knowledge or Gyan has been divided are described in verse nos. 28-30, while verse nos. 46-52 are expositions on the non-dual nature of the ultimate Truth. The metaphor of the tree is used in verse no. 13 to describe the world, of two birds sitting upon the same tree to describe the relationship between the Jiva (living being) and Ishwar (the supreme Lord) in verse nos. 41-45, and of the bow and the arrow to narrate how the Atma can reach Brahm in verse nos. 38-39. Finally, verse nos. 16-24 is in the form of a prayer that comes out spontaneously from the heart of a self-realised and Brahm-realised spiritual aspirant who has discovered the ultimate Truth so much lauded and expounded by the Upanishads.

For this world torn asunder by countless opinions and numerous philosophies creating endless confusions and consternations in the mind of a spiritual aspirant, this Upanishad comes a bright ray of sunshine that would remove all sorts of dichotomies and differences, and therefore it has great moral and spiritual value.

1. Rudra Hridaya, Yogkundali, Bhasma Jabal, Rudraaksha Jabal and Ganapati Upanishads are the five scriptures that delve into the metaphysical essence of the concept of OM. They are like the five great Mantras (spiritual formulas) used for doing the great sacrifice represented by an effort to acquire knowledge of Brahm, the supreme transcendental divine Truth in creation. They personify the great sayings of the Vedas. [That is, what these five Upanishads teach is the basic tenet of the Vedas. They are essentially directed at espousing the non-dual and supreme nature of Brahm and its unequivocal truthfulness, transcendence and quintessential divinity.]

Sage Shukdeo¹ bowed his head before his revered father, the great sage and seer Veda Vyas², and requested him—‘Oh Lord! Which is the one God so much talked about in the Vedas and extolled by them as the Supreme Being? Who is that God in whom all the other Gods are deemed to have their existence? (1).

[Note—¹*Shukdeo* was the son of the legendary seer and renowned sage Veda Vyas. He was highly respected and was born of the celestial maiden named Ghrataachi when she had taken the form of a parrot, called Shuka in Sanskrit, to produce Shukdeo. He had his education under the expert guidance of his father Veda Vyas (refer Maho-panishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-20, and the entire Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which is presently being narrated). He was fortunate enough to have as his wise Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) the legendary king Janak, the father of Sita of the Ramayan fame and the most self-realised and enlightened king of

his time (refer Maho-panishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 28-77) and Lord Shiva himself (refer Shukar Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda which was preached by Lord Shiva to Shukdeo).

His self restraint was so profound that the celestial Apsara, the dancing damsel of the court of Indra, the king of Gods, failed to trap him in her honey-trap of lust and passions. Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug. In an incident narrated in Maho-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 21-27 it is described how sage Shukdeo had to wait for twenty-one days before king Janak granted him an audience to test his self control over anger, ego and self-pride of being a son of an enlightened father of the stature of sage Veda Vyas as well as his sincerity and steadfastness of purpose which are important virtues that must be present in a student of spiritualism and important criterion by which his eligibility as a disciple can be judged.

The Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda describes him as a truly Brahm-realised sage along with sage Sankaadi in its Canto 1, verse no. 47.

Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of Hindu mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug (which is the last of the four-Yug cycle).

²Sage *Veda Vyas* was the son of sage Paraashar and Satyavati, a fisherwoman. Since he had dark complexion, he was also called Krishna, and since he was born on an island, he was called Dvaipayaana. Hence his other name was Krishna Dvaipayaana. Veda Vyas gathered all the Mantras of the hitherto undivided Vedas, edited them and grouped them according to the use to which they were put during fire sacrifices. This added another epithet to his name—viz. ‘Vyas’, the one who knew the Vedas like the back of his hands and was therefore able to classify and divide them into four distinct texts as they now exist; the one who is the best preacher of the subject and made it easy for dissemination and teaching purposes. He had also penned the epic Mahabharat, the eighteen Purans and the eighteen sub-Purans. It is said that Ganesh, the most revered and wise son of Shiva who has the head of an elephant, was the scribe who wrote down the dictation of Mahabharat as Veda Vyas narrated it non-stop, a job which is not a child’s play. It is also believed that inspite of remaining a chaste saint for life, he had begot the three legendary figures of Mahabharat, viz. Dhritraastra, Pandu and Vidur, from the wives of Vichitravirya at the behest of his mother Satyavati. He gave divine sight to Sanjay, the charioteer who narrated the on going famous battle of the Mahabharat to Dhritraastra who was blind. Being a contemporary sage of the Mahabharat period, he knew almost all the persons of this great epic.]

2. Please tell me also who that one God is by worshipping whom I would have worshipped all the other Gods, and they would be pleased with me?’

When Shukdeo asked this question, his father (Veda Vyas) replied—(2).

3. [The following verses are an exposition on the basic truth of the principle of ‘non-duality’ or Advaitya Vedanta—that all the different forms of Gods and Goddesses, and for that matter ‘all that exists’, are essentially the same Supreme Being known as Brahm revealed or manifested in all these individual forms in order to fulfill the varying needs and different functions of creation. The Gods cited here are the primary Gods in creation, such as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, Shiva or Rudra the concluder, the Sun God and the Moon God who represent the warmth and energy giving Fire God (verse no.

3) and Vishnu the protector of life and its sustainer (verse no. 4) respectively. The remarkable thing is that these Gods are not independent Godheads, but interchangeable and synonymous with each other as would be evident when one reads the verses, especially verse nos. 3-24.

The Goddesses represent the dynamism of Brahm and his stupendous creative powers, and they are principally two—viz. (a) Uma (verse no. 4, 9) or Bhagwati (verse no. 8) who is depicted as the divine Mother and the consort or counterpart of Shiva or Rudra because he is deemed to be the supreme Father and Lord of creation, and (b) Laxmi who symbolises the necessary wealth that is needed to sustain the creation created by the Supreme Being in the form of the Viraat Purush who is also known as Vishnu. It ought to be noted that there appears to be a bit of confusion in the maze of names and epithets, and so each verse is accompanied by notes to explain the concepts. Perhaps, this was purposely created in order to warn and tell the spiritual aspirant not to be confused by so many names of the same Principal that appear in the scriptures, but understand that they all refer to the same non-dual entity known as Brahm that is supreme and transcendental.]

‘All the Gods are incorporated in the divine form of Lord Rudra (a form of Shiva) and they are different manifestations of this one Lord known as Rudra. In other words, Rudra personifies all the divine virtues in creation represented or symbolised by all the Gods independently and jointly.

On the right of Rudra¹ are established the three Gods such as Surya (the Sun God), Brahma (the creator of visible creation as well as of the Vedas), and the three forms of Agni² (the Fire God; the three sacred fires). [There is great significance in this statement. Brahma the creator, the Sun God and the Fire God are all metaphors for and harbingers of life and creation; they stand as symbols of vitality and life-infusing energy. Brahma is personified Supreme Being (Brahm) as the grandfather and patriarch of visible creation who not only created the creatures but all the knowledge and codes needed for proper regulation of this creation even for time in infinite future. The Sun is an evident source of the basic requirements of life such as light, heat and warmth; the Sun regulates the seasons and the year as well as the cycle of day and night. Its importance can be fathomed from the fact that plant photosynthesis depends directly upon its light and heat, and all forms of life depend on plants, directly or indirectly, for food without which life would be extinct. We know that one primary reason why the dinosaurs vanished from earth is the blocking out of sunlight due to dust that was raised when a meteor hit earth long time ago. Not only this, the very existence of earth depends upon the Sun because it keeps the earth from spinning out of control and getting lost in the bottomless void of the cosmos by its gravitational pull which helps the earth to remain firmly tethered to its position without any other thing to support its position in an empty void of space. Similarly, ‘Fire’ is an important aspect of life—it provides the necessary heat and warmth without which no life is imaginable on earth. The fire is present inherently in the earth itself, and it is the fire that helps the earth to harbour life in all its myriad variations. That the ‘fire’ and ‘life’ are synonymous with each other is proved when a man dies and his body becomes cold. As long as this body is warm, it is deemed that vestiges of life remain in it and when it becomes ‘dead cold’ it is a clear sign that the man has died. Fire is needed to cook food, to digest this food, to produce food, to keep the body warm, and

so on and so forth that its importance need not be emphasized at length. If fact, these three godheads—Brahma, Sun and Fire—are the symbolic Trinity Gods who bring about the existence of creation into effect.] (3).

[Note—¹Lord Shiva has eleven forms called *Rudras*.

Lord Shiva is considered to be the most enlightened of the Trinity Gods, and is therefore called *Maheshwar*. He always remains in a meditative posture, always contemplating and meditating on the supreme Soul and the Truth. But still he shows anger and mercilessness, because one of his tasks is to punish the evil and sinful ones by ruthlessly slaying them in order to protect the good and righteous souls in the creation. Further, when his meditation and peace is disturbed he also becomes angry. He remains aloof and disinterested in the world, because he is very wise and enlightened, and he stays in the form of an ascetic. Ordinary people think that he is proud, arrogant and haughty because he does not give a damn to worldly formalities and niceties of behaviour. Shiva's failure to conform to set norms of proper and sane conduct makes him look most odd God. The word 'Rudra' is used as a metaphor for anger, wrath, vehemence and cussedness.

One of the other names of Rudra is *Kalagni-Rudra* which literally means Lord Shiva, the concluder, in his most ferocious form which is like the fire of dooms-day. Shiva is the greatest ascetic, a great renunciate, most auspicious and regarded as an enlightened God. So his invocation helps the spiritual seeker to burn all his worldly delusions and taints arising out of ignorance and attachments to falsehoods. This paves the path for his ultimate liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Lord Shiva is the designated Authority that controls death and destruction, not only of the gross physical world and its visible objects but also metaphorically of all the evil tendencies, all the blemishes and faults that are characteristic of this deluding world and which usually cover the soul of the creature like a layer of thick scum floating on the surface of the otherwise crystal-clear waters of the mountain lake.

The Rudraaksha beads (seeds of the tree *eleocarpus ganitrus*) with five faces or surfaces used in rosaries and necklaces are also called Kalagni-rudra beads because these are very much liked by Lord Shiva.

Refer 'Rudraaksha Jabal Upanishad' of the Sam Veda tradition, and 'Kalagni Rudra Upanishad' of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

²The three fires referred to here are the following—(a) 'Garhyapatya' fire—i.e. the fire of the household hearth; the main fire of the formal fire sacrifice; the fire that every householder is supposed to keep alive and worship regularly and from which the first spark is taken for the rituals associated with religious ceremonies), (b) 'Dakshinagni' fire—i.e. the fire used as a witness to making charities or any other religious festivity; the fire lit at the site of a sacrificial fire ritual, near its south end, and (c) 'Ahawaniya' fire—i.e. the fire lit to invoke the Gods during a ritualistic sacrifice.]

4. To the left of him (Rudra) are established the three divine entities such as Goddess Uma (the divine consort of Shiva, also known by her more famous name of Parvati), Lord Vishnu (the sustainer and protector of creation) and Som (the Moon God). [Earlier verse no. had narrated what was to the 'right of Rudra'. Now this verse describes what is to his 'left'. In other words, Rudra is in the center, and these Trinity divinities are to his right and left just like we have the right and the left hands on either sides of the torso. This is to say that these Trinity Gods help Rudra to carry out his functions of creation, sustenance and conclusion of creation. Uma is a Goddess personifying the dynamic power and energy of Brahm, in this case personified as Rudra or Shiva, to actually

implement his decision to create and then not only carry it out effectively but exercise effective control over the vast creation which would have become unmanageable had Brahm not exercised his overall controlling and veto powers. She represents the female aspect of creation, and therefore is called the cosmic Mother. In this role she is depicted as the divine consort of Shiva because the latter is Brahm, the cosmic Father, personified. Once the creation was conceived in Uma's womb and later on when it emerged in the form of the visible world as we know it now necessitated an arrangement for its perpetual sustenance, nourishment and protection. This Brahm did in his manifestation as Vishnu. Som literally is the soothing elixir of life and eternity—and it is appropriate to use this as an epithet for Vishnu in his role as the sustainer and protector of creation. There is another way of looking at the concept of 'Som'. Since the latter is also the drink drunk during fire sacrifices and by the Gods as it provides bliss and ecstasy, and its physical form resembles the viscous fluid responsible for creation, i.e. the male semen, it is likened to these feelings during the course of sexual intercourse when the male semen is implanted in the female sexual organ as a necessary part of the process of creation. Since Vishnu is also the Viraat Purush from whom the entire creation is said to have come into existence, and he had done the cosmic fire sacrifice in order to set this chain reaction in motion, the epithet of Som for Vishnu is most apt.]

Uma is Lord Vishnu¹, and Vishnu is Som², the Moon God. [That is, all these three are the different manifestations of the same Divinity revealed in different forms according to the needs of the circumstance in creation as described above.] (4).

[Note—¹Lord *Vishnu* stands for the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme Brahm from whom the rest of the creation emerged. Since Brahm is neutral and does not do anything, so when he decided to initiate the process of creation he used his inherent power, authority and energy to kick-start the process. This 'dynamic energy, strength, vitality, power and stamina' of Brahm manifested itself in the form of Shakti known as Prakriti. The latter revealed itself in a grosser form as Uma or Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva when the Viraat Purush assumed the form of the Trinity Gods. Therefore by extension, the divine husband of Uma, i.e. Shiva, is Vishnu by another name. *Uma* is the dynamic principle of Brahm in the latter's manifestation as Vishnu.

²*Moon God* is said to be the custodian of Amrit, the elixir of eternal life drunk by gods. More importantly, this elixir represents the primary life-infusing vital fluid (semen) that was used by Brahm to implant his spark (sperm) in the womb of Prakriti (Mother Nature) to initiate the process of creation. In other words, this Moon God was symbolically a personification of Vishnu's vital life-infusing and life-sustaining abilities in the form of the white cosmic semen. That is also why the moon is white like the semen.

The Moon God is known as 'Chandrama' in Sanskrit, and he appears first in the Rig Veda, 10/85/19). He is the patron God of night. His origin is in the Mana (heart and mind; the emotions and thoughts) of the Parmatma or the supreme Lord (the Viraat Purush or Vishnu) (Yajur Veda, 31/12; Taittiriya Brahman, 3/10/8/5). His existence depends upon the Sun God. On the dark night, he is supposed to enter the Sun (Aiteriya Brahman, 8/28). Chandrama is synonymous with Som, the divine elixir and sanctified drink drunk during the religious sacrifices as it gives its drinker peace and a long life (Kaushatiki Brahman, 16/5; Aiteriya Brahman, 7/11). He is the controller of seasons and months; he always changes so appear to be like a new born everyday. He gives peace and long life to the 'Stota', the chanter of hymns as prayers (Rig Veda, 10/85/19). Chandra or the Moon Gods appears in the Vedas as follows-- Rig Veda—10/85/19; Yajur Veda—1/28; Atharva Veda—6/78/1-2; 19/1.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition describes this Moon as being as the symbolic form of the water element. The moon is said to be the celestial pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss that is drunk by the Gods. In the human body, it is represented by the Eda Naadi passing through the left nostrils and which is used during do Pranayam. [Refer Canto 1, verse 166.] It is also present as the crescent moon, the Ardha Chandrakar Chakra, which is said to be the shape of the water element of which the patron deity is Vishnu, the sustainer of creation, and located from the knee to the hip region. [Refer Canto 1, verse 176 and Canto 5, verse no. 13.] At other places it describes the symbolic importance of creating a union of the moon and sun as metaphor for the union of the creature with the supreme Brahm. [Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 56 and 68 for instance.] In the context of Pranayam it is used to indicate the bliss obtained by the ascetic. [Refer Canto 1, verse nos. 120, 127.]

Canto 1, verse no. 133 of this Upanishad describes the great Mantra 'So-a-ham' and asserts that the moon stands for the letter 'sa' of this Mantra. Other instances where moon appears in Yogshikha Upanishad are Canto 1, verse nos. 133, 146, 176, Canto 3, verse no. 11, and Canto 6, verse no. 4.]

5. To bow before Govind (one of the numerous names of Vishnu) and pay obeisance to him is equivalent to bowing before Lord Shiva and paying obeisance to the latter (because they are both the same Divinity personified). Those who worship Vishnu (who rides the Gurud, the legendary heron of eagle) with devotion and reverence are indeed worshipping and showing reverence to Lord Shiva who rides a bull (5).

6. Those who do not like the strange and unconventional form of Shiva as 'Virupaksha' that is very odd and inconsistent with the usually pleasant form of Vishnu, and therefore resent it and have aversion for it cannot hope to ever please Lord Janaardana (Vishnu, the compassionate Lord who is merciful towards his subjects, protects them and loves them). It is equivalent to having resentment for and aversion to Lord Janaardana himself¹.

Those who do not know the mysterious secrets of Rudra (Shiva) can never know the esoteric secrets of Keshav (Vishnu) as well; they are ignorant of who Vishnu actually is² (6).

[Note—¹This verse is a clear indication that both these Gods—Shiva and Vishnu—are to be treated alike and with the same degree of respect and honour. This proves the fact that this Upanishad aims at establishing harmony and goodwill between the worshippers of Vishnu and Shiva who were traditionally at odds with each other.

Shiva is called 'Virupaksha' because of his external appearances which are most odd and unconventional. He is depicted by the Purans as being naked, wearing only animal skin and having ash of the cremation ground smeared all over his body, has serpents wrapped all round him, eats intoxicating herbs and remains perpetually in an intoxicated state, lives in the cremation ground in the company of ghosts and phantoms, gets angry at the slightest provocation or pretext, etc. This external behaviour of the Lord is obviously at odds with that of Vishnu who is depicted in a flamboyant form with magnificent and colourful attire, fully decked up with priceless ornaments, having a charming demeanour, pleasant speech that offends none, good company, a regal abode in the heaven, and always sporting an enchanting and benevolent smile captivating the heart of millions of his devotees as compared to the fear-instilling, grave and somber mood in which Shiva lives.

So this verse intends to enlighten the spiritual aspirant that he should not be misled by these and other such dichotomies and differences that exist in this creation, or the

various forms in which the different godheads are depicted in the Purans and other texts, but peer underneath and see the reality and the truth that they represent. External appearance is no criterion to decide that one God is senior to the other, as this is necessary so that the concerned God can play his role in the cogwheel of creation perfectly. This wisdom, erudition and enlightenment would be called acquisition of 'true Gyan' or knowledge that is 'true' and 'enlightening' in the real sense.

The outwardly odd behaviour and fearful external appearance of Shiva which makes him 'Virupaksha' is misleading—for the simple reason that the Shiva is very enlightened and self-realised who has totally detached himself from worldly involvement and pleasures, and instead prefers to remain engrossed in meditation and contemplation. He has tasted the divine elixir of self-realisation and the peace that comes with meditation and contemplation, so is the least bothered by how he looks and what people think of him. He is an ascetic par-excellence. Hence he is always seen with closed or half-open eyes. His short temper is due to this trance-like state of his blissful inner self—for when his internal peace of meditation is disturbed by any kind of external disturbances, he gets extremely annoyed and exceedingly peeved. His staying in the cremation ground is indicative of his close acquaintance with or understanding of death which makes him totally aware of the perishable nature of life and the futility of pursuing it at the cost of liberation and deliverance of the soul. Since he constantly sees death in the face, no charms of this world can ever be sufficiently enticing as to trap him in its snare.

But does this mean that Vishnu is engrossed in enjoying this perishable world and is in any way less self-enlightened and divine than Shiva? Not the least; the Lord has to carry on with the function of sustenance and protection of this creation, and so has to adopt a posture that suits his job. He needs wealth and powers and authority to provide for the necessities of this creation, create prosperity for its future wellbeing, and maintain law and order in this creation. Shiva is only concerned with conclusion, so he can afford to maintain a distanced life style. That is also why Shiva is usually the patron God of ascetics and their like because they symbolise the last phase of life marked by total renunciation, spending time on meditation and contemplation, and generally preparing to face the ultimate truth that all material objects of this world are perishable and they have to be abandoned at the time of death. So a wise man should not hanker after them and get unduly perturbed and anxious for them at the internal level of his 'self'. At the most, they should be used to fulfill the obligations of existential life as and when they present themselves during the course of the soul's journey in this world, but not thought to be the truthful thing to be aimed at and achieved at any cost whatsoever. The world does not provide long-term bliss, peace and tranquility, and neither is it eternal and restful.

²Shiva stands for the last phase of life and is the manifestation of Brahm to bring about the conclusion of creation at the macro level, and of the individual in the form of the death of the body at the micro level of creation. What is the secret to be known? It is the fact that in spite of being the great God called 'Mahadev' who is most powerful and omnipotent, Shiva prefers to remain away from the limelight of creation. Iconographically, he has been depicted as being submerged in deep meditation and contemplation on his inner self. This indicates that he has learnt that true peace comes with realising the bliss emanating from the Atma, and not by remaining engrossed in the material world of sense objects which only create delusions and consternations. He is deemed to be the most enlightened God as indicated by the fact that he is the only one to have the activated 'third eye' of wisdom located in the middle of the forehead between the eyebrows. Shiva remains submerged in the ecstasy and blissful state of Brahm realisation. Which brings us to the main point of this verse—that is, this Brahm upon whom Shiva meditates had manifested himself in the form of the Viraat Purush who is also known as Vishnu at the time of the first stages of creation. So Shiva is actually

meditating upon Vishnu. This fact has been affirmed in the epic Ramayan where Lord Ram, an incarnation of Vishnu, calls the image of Shiva installed on the shores of the ocean before his departure for the conquest of Lanka and its demon king Ravana, as 'Rameshwar'—literally meaning 'the Lord of Ram'. It also means 'One whose Lord is Ram'. In other words, Ram as an incarnation of Vishnu is the Lord of Shiva, and vice versa.

Therefore, in the lexicon of metaphysics, Vishnu is the supreme Brahm upon whom Shiva meditates and remains engrossed in his memory. Shiva represents the extremely enlightened and dispassionate form of Brahm, whereas Vishnu stands for his more worldly manifestation that is engaged in affairs of creation and its maintenance. This Upanishad also asserts that the Jiva, the living being in his essential and truthful form as the Atma, the pure consciousness, is Ishwar or the supreme Lord personified—refer verse nos. 41-45 on the one hand, and on the other hand that this supreme Lord is no one else but Shiva—which is the basic theme around which this Upanishad is built. So, when it is said that Shiva meditates upon Vishnu it also implies that an enlightened man who has realised who he actually is worships the supreme Lord of creation known as Vishnu. It is easy for him to worship Vishnu than Shiva for one other reason. Vishnu had incarnated on several occasions and lived amongst humans, creating a legion of stories and worldly deeds that are well documented in the different Purans and Itihasas, such as the Bhagwat Maha Puran and the epic Ramayan that the ordinary man can read, find practical to follow and easy to relate to because they describe to him things and circumstances and the world with which he is very much acquainted and which is the one that is causing him all the problems in the first place.]

7. Rudra symbolises the 'Beej' or seed (represented by the sperm) which is the basic unit carrier of life, while Janaardana (Vishnu) stands for the cosmic womb in which this Beej is planted in order to develop the embryo of creation¹.

Rudra is Brahma the creator, and the latter is Fire God himself². [Refer verse no. 3 above.] (7).

[Note—¹That is why the Viraat Purush, the subtler form of Vishnu, is said to have done the initial fire sacrifice and implanted the spark of creation in his own self. The one and the same entity became known as the male Viraat Purush and the female Prakriti by a very subtle polarization of virtues. This is the primary form of asexual reproduction when the Viraat Purush produced the Prakriti out of his own self.

With this holistic view-point, it is easy to understand this verse. That aspect of Brahm which is neutral and totally oblivious of this world and remains self-contented is known as Shiva, while when it took up a dynamic form in order to initiate the process of creation it came to be known as Vishnu. Presently here, Shiva is regarded as the Viraat Purush, and Vishnu is regarded as Prakriti or Mother Nature. This is because the Viraat was the 'cosmic Father' who provided the sperm, the 'vital spark of life'. The cosmic bowl where the creation was conceived was not a hollow devoid of the presence of the Viraat for the simple reason that whatever that existed was nothing but Brahm, and this Viraat Purush was Brahm's gross macrocosmic body that was all-pervading and all-encompassing; nothing existed outside of it. Therefore, this so-called 'cosmic womb' was also the body of the Viraat Purush from which the sperm was produced. Hence, the Viraat acted as the cosmic Father as well as the cosmic Mother called Prakriti. Again, since Vishnu and Viraat Purush are the same entities, it follows that Vishnu and Prakriti are also the same.

Since the Mother is responsible for nourishing the offspring with her milk after it's born and with her own fluids when it was still in its formative stage in her womb, Vishnu is called the Janaardana, the sustainer, nourisher and protector of creation, as opposed to

Shiva. That is, Vishnu is a manifestation of Shiva for the purpose of sustenance and protection of creation.

²It has just been said in this verse that Rudra or Shiva is the cosmic Father of creation by providing the 'seed' or sperm of life. Since the function of creation is the duty of Brahma, it is now confirmed that Rudra is none else but Brahma, or Brahma is a manifestation of Rudra for the purpose of creation. An interesting thing is to be observed here—whereas traditionally Rudra is regarded as the God responsible for death, in this verse he is shown as being the cosmic father and creator. The 'sperm' inherently has the dynamism, the strength and the vital life-creating powers and energy required to initiate the process of creation, and since this is provided by Rudra it is obvious that he is the Father of the entire creation, including the Gods and Goddesses. That is why he is honoured with the title of 'Maheshwar', the great God—refer verse no. 9.

Now, 'fire' which stands for the eclectic virtues of light, heat, warmth, energy and vitality is the most important requirement for life in all its forms. Life, heat and warmth go hand in hand; one cannot separate the warmth and heat of fire from the earth and imagine it to be habitable by any stretch of imagination. This is proved by the fact that no life is sustainable in frigid conditions and sub-zero temperatures, while warm climate teems with life in all its colourful hues. Since Brahma has the mandate of creation, he is regarded as the personification of the Fire God. Or, by extension, Brahma and the Fire God are both manifestations of Rudra (Shiva) for the purpose of creation. In fact, the word 'Rudra' means the ferocious form of the otherwise calm, amiable and docile Shiva, and 'fire' is a metaphor for anger and ferocity, the qualities opposite of Shiva.

This verse, like many others in this magnificent Upanishad of Advaitya Vedanta, is a remarkable exposition to prove the uniformity and non-duality of creation!]

8. Lord Rudra (Shiva) is manifested as both Lords Brahma the creator and Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation. Besides this, the visible world overlooked by the Agni (the Fire God represented by the celestial sun) and the Som (the Moon God represented by the celestial moon) is also a manifestation of this same Rudra¹.

All the males of creation represent Rudra, while all the females symbolise Bhagwati (one of the many names of Uma or Parvati, the divine consort of Rudra or Shiva)² (8).

[Note—¹This is why Shiva is often referred to as 'Maheshwar', the Great God, essentially implying that he is senior to all the other Gods including the other two Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma and Vishnu. It is like the case of an equilateral triangle having all the three sides equal and therefore all the angles also of equal degree, but to be a 'triangle' it must have an apex corner or point and two base corners or points. This 'apex' point is personified by Shiva, while the other two base corners are represented by Brahma and Vishnu. Further, since the entire visible creation is not only created and pervaded by Brahm, the Supreme Being, but also is considered as his visible revelation, it obviously follows that whatever there is in this world is Brahm and by extension Rudra or Shiva. Therefore, the sun and the moon are also within this sphere of definition of Brahm.

²Rudra is one of the dynamic forms of Shiva. The latter represents the Viraat Purush who is the male aspect of creation. From the Viraat was created the female counterpart called the Shakti. As the process of creation progressed, the Viraat Purush came to be known as Vishnu and Shakti as Bhagwati. The word 'Bhag' refers to the female genital where the male sperm fuses with the female egg to form the embryo. Hence, the form of the Lord that acted as the cosmic womb where the cosmic egg was conceived and nourished till it emerged as the visible creation was called Bhagwati—i.e. one who is possessed of the Bhag, one who is the Lord of the female as its rightful husband and therefore has full

right over the sexual process associated with her organs. In other words, the Supreme Being revealed in the form of the Trinity Gods is the unquestioned Lord of creation that has emerged from the cosmic womb represented by Mother Nature called Prakriti. Since Prakriti has the magnificent ability to bear such a vast creation in her bosom, she is also called Shakti, or the eclectic virtues of strength, energy and powers personified.

Earlier verse no. 7 has already stated that Rudra symbolises the cosmic sperm or 'Beej' representing the male aspect of creation while Vishnu stands for the cosmic womb or the female aspect of creation. It has been said elsewhere that at the time of creation, the Viraat Purush had assumed the form a man or male. Therefore, the Shakti aspect of creation revealed as the female. Hence, all males are manifestations of Rudra, and all females of Bhagwati. The basic idea in this verse is that one should not distinguish between any two humans as one being of a higher class and the other being of a lower class. The eclectic and well considered enlightened view is to treat all the creatures as one or the other forms of the same macrocosmic form of the supreme transcendental Lord who is the only truthful 'One' in creation and who is present in all the distinguishable forms in which we see this world at our microcosmic level. Refer notes to earlier verse nos. 3-8 also.]

9. Similarly, the entire creation—both the animate as well as the inanimate—is nothing but Rudra and Uma personified, a visible form of the invisible Rudra and Uma¹.

The entire visible world symbolises Uma (the active principle of Rudra and dynamic aspect of Brahm that is known as Prakriti), while the entire invisible world stands for Maheshwar (literally the 'great Lord' referring to the Viraat Purush who is the invisible macrocosmic manifestation of Brahm and represents the gross body of the creation as a whole; the passive aspect of the supreme transcendental Brahm) (9).

[Note--¹This indicates that the entire creation having a male component and a female component represents the two divine aspects of Brahm known as Rudra and Uma which correspond to Brahm's passive and active forms respectively.]

The entire creation has come into being from the Viraat Purush. Had the Viraat Purush not undergone self-mutation to produce a male and a female and then cleaving to give them separate and independent existence, there would have been only one sex in creation, and we would not have separate male and female. Since the Viraat had metamorphosed himself as a male and a female in order to initiate and propagate creation in the very beginning of creation itself, we still have these two forms of creatures who continue with this basic function of creation even today. To ensure that his progeny did not abstain from this task of procreation, the Lord was so clever that he made this exercise of having sex as the most attractive of all deeds in this creation. A person who can overcome this 'natural instinct' is therefore regarded as a personified Shiva because he would be like Brahm himself who did not indulge in any sexual activity when he decided to create. So, does this mean that a self-restrained ascetic has any less powers than the man who exhibits his prowess by creating a new life in the form of his off spring? Not at all for the simple reason that all Yoga Upanishads emphasise that a self-realised ascetic acquires a number of mystical powers called the 'Siddhis' which empower him with such great powers that even the Gods are no match for him.]

10-11. The cosmic union of Uma (Shakti representing the active and dynamic aspect of the supreme Brahm and transcendental Divinity) and Shankar (Rudra or Shiva representing the passive aspect of the supreme Brahm and Divinity) creates Vishnu (the Viraat Purush—the macrocosmic and invisible gross body of Brahm from which the rest of creation unfolded)¹.

Therefore, those who bow to Vishnu with great reverence and worship him with great devotion are deemed to be knowledgeable about the three aspects of the Atma (the divine entity known as the universal Soul and the quintessential Consciousness of creation)—viz. the Atma, the Parmatma and the Antaraatma². This wisdom, erudition and enlightenment helps them to know the eclectic quintessential Truth of creation and the fundamental Reality behind all that exists, which in turn provides them with an opportunity to become self-realised and Brahm-realised. In other words, they find shelter in the supreme Atma which is the Truth representing their own self and the rest of the creation³ (10-11).

[Note—¹When the passive aspect of Brahm known as Shankar or Rudra decided to initiate the process of creation, he activated his own creative dynamic energy that was hitherto in a latent and dormant format, thereby enabling himself to do so. This activated dynamism of Rudra came to be known as Uma. The resultant off spring was the Viraat Purush. Hence, the Viraat Purush is the result of the symbolic union of the male aspect of Brahm as Shiva or Shankar or Rudra, and the female aspect as Uma.

²The three aspects of the Atma, the pure consciousness, mentioned here are as follows—(1) The word *Atma* refers to the divine cosmic entity that is pure consciousness and without which no existence is possible. The Atma is universal, uniform, all-pervading, all-encompassing, the ultimate Truth and Reality of creation, most divine, magnificent and glorious, pure and uncorrupt cosmic Consciousness. It is the soul and essence of existence; it is the base upon which everything is founded. In fact, what is non-Atma is considered as non-truth in creation. This Atma is transcendental and beyond the purview of time, space and definition. The glorious and eclectic virtues and divine nature of this Atma is the subject matter of a number of Upanishads. (2) At the macrocosmic level, this Atma is known as the supreme Atma or *Parmatma*. This refers to the superior macrocosmic version of the Atma that was revealed when Brahm decided to initiate the process of creation and manifested his own self as the all pervading and all encompassing Viraat Purush, or as the different Gods of the Trinity such as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva or Rudra. This is the Parmatma or the supreme Atma or the supreme Lord at the macrocosmic level who is being referred to in this verse. (3) Finally, when the creation came into being, this supreme Consciousness represented by the Supreme Being known as Parmatma took up residence in the inner being of the individual creature as its Atma or soul. This aspect of the Atma was called *Antaraatma* as it resides in the inner self of the individual creature. This is the microcosmic aspect of the Atma known as the Parmatma at the macrocosmic level, and as the Atma in its primary and fundamental level that transcends all these known forms of creation. The term 'Atma' in its principal and elementary form is the Consciousness in its purest and most sublime form.

Therefore there is no fundamental difference between these three forms of the Atma just like there is no difference between the basic nature and identity of an entity known as 'water' whether it is in a cup, in an ocean or as invisible moisture which is uniformly distributed in the atmosphere but not visible to the naked eye. The water in the cup is like the individual Atma of the creature that is limited by the space of the cup representing the body of the creature, the water of the ocean is like the macrocosmic counterpart of this individual Atma because of its vastness and infinite dimensions, and the water molecule of the water vapour or moisture is the Atma in its microscopic and atomic form as the basic element called Consciousness.

³This wisdom is called 'self awareness and enlightenment'. It is the awareness of the ultimate Truth and Reality of creation. Once a wise man comes to know this truth, he would abhor all delusions and falsehoods pertaining to the gross body and the material world as if they were the spiritual plague.]

12. The Antaraatma is Brahma the creator, Parmatma is Maheshwar (literally the ‘Great God’ but meaning Shiva), and the universal and eternal Atma is Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation (12).

[Note—The Anataaratma is the consciousness residing in the bosom of all living beings as their own individual Atma. It forms the core of the inner self, the individual creature in his true form. This can be roughly translated as the sub-conscious mind that directs the conscious mind to act. Since it is the mind that creates this world by its imaginative powers and then believes it to be true, it is said that the Antaraatma is the creator of the physical visible world, or is equivalent to Brahma who created this world by using his mind. This is because Brahma had the technical knowledge that was required for this process, and knowledge and its application is the function of the mind and intellect.

The Parmatma is of course the Supreme Being, the Lord of all that exists. Hence, he is ‘the Great God’ or Maheshwar. He remains in a passive state of meditation and perpetual contemplation as symbolised by Shiva.

Finally, Vishnu is the Atma because he symbolically represents the Viraat Purush and displays all the unique characteristic qualities of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic invisible Lord of creation from whom the three visible Gods—viz. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—emerged. So therefore, Viraat is like the soul and the basis upon which the entire edifice of this creation is built, and who is at the very foundation of creation of these Trinity Gods.]

13. This creation as a whole is like a huge tree¹. The three parts of this creation are known as the three worlds (celestial, terrestrial and nether or subterranean), and they are like its outstretched branches. [Refer verse no. 41 also.]

The upper part of this cosmic tree is represented by Vishnu. Its middle part (trunk) is represented by Brahma. And its roots are represented by Maheshwar (Shiva symbolising the supreme Brahm)² (13).

[Note—¹The metaphor of the *tree* has been employed in Katho-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no.1 also to describe the creation.

²The upper and outer branches of a tree spread out in the sun and their leaves absorb sunlight and carry on photosynthesis. The branches give shelter to so many forms of fauna and animal life—birds, flies, insects, centipedes and reptiles etc. (e.g. the caterpillar, snakes, squirrels, lizards etc.). This is a clear symbolism of the functions of *Vishnu* who is assigned the task of sustenance and giving protection to the creation.

The trunk and central branches stand for *Brahma* the creator because it is out of this central core that the outer branches and leaves and flowers emerge and spread out. In the case of the huge Banyan tree it is seen that these branches produce secondary trees by first touching the ground and then transforming this apparent prop into a stem or trunk of the second spread. It is symbolic way of how Brahma unfolded the creation and then let it spread out on its own and reproduce itself. The trunk of the tree is a link between the upper part bearing the leaves, fruits and flowers, and the root that anchors the whole structure to the ground and absorbs nourishment from the soil. The trunk helps the nourishment absorbed by the root to be taken and distributed equally to all the distant parts of a huge tree. In other words, Brahma the creator is that aspect of the supreme transcendental Brahm (the ultimate Absolute Truth and cosmic Consciousness) that helped to reveal the existence of the latter when he unfolded the multicoloured and multifarious vast creation which is so infinite, varied and unique that it defies all definition, narration and imagination.

The visible aspect of the world is like the unfolding of the upper part of the tree consisting of the stem, fruit, leaves and flowers, while the root is like the Viraat Purush from whom the entire creation evolved. The seed which is the 'basic cause' of the entire structure coming into existence, including the root, is like Brahm. At a slightly grosser level of evolutionary ladder, the three Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva would represent the trunk, the root, the flowers and the fruits depending upon how one interprets this analogy. For instance, Brahma made this visible creation possible and laid down its foundation; hence he is like the trunk as well as the root. Vishnu sustains and takes care of the world; hence he is like the root which absorbs nourishment and the trunk which distributes this nourishment to all the parts of the tree. Shiva is like the leaves, flowers and fruits because they lend beauty to the tree, are its essence and auspicious reward, and produce the seed from the next tree would be born along with the sign of the tree's final years of its life-cycle.

Since it is the root that is at the foundation of the entire edifice, it can also be compared to Maheshwar—the great God who is the anchor of everything in existence. Had it not been for the root, the tree would not have come into existence in the first place. The root anchors the tree and prevents it getting uprooted in the fiercest of storms. The tree draws its basic nutrients from the ground through the root. Without the root, there would be no tree. Even if the tree is cut on its upper side but its roots remain intact, it would regenerate itself.]

14. Vishnu personifies the auspicious objective or aim of doing anything. Brahma represents the actual process of doing deeds or giving effect to one's plans. And Maheshwar stands for the cause behind anything that happens, or occurrence of any circumstance that requires action to be taken and deeds to be done (14).

[Note—*Vishnu* signifies that the aim of any deed should be righteousness and auspiciousness. This aim ensures that the deed is done in a righteous and auspicious manner and subsequently bears good results and fosters all round happiness and goodwill for the creature in life. When this does not happen, the creation suffers. This is why when unrighteousness represented by the evil forces of creation personified by Demons are in the ascendance, Vishnu incarnates himself as one or the other incarnations to slay these Demons and restore order and the virtues of righteousness and auspiciousness in creation.

Brahma is the godhead that actually took necessary actions to initiate the process of creation of the physical world once the Viraat Purush had decided to do so. Therefore, Brahma symbolises the virtues of implementing decisions and taking appropriate actions so one's dreams and aspirations can be fulfilled. Brahma also created the vast repositories of knowledge in the form of the Vedas, indicating that it is not only sufficient to do deeds but more importantly to do them in the correct manner.

Finally, *Shiva* stands for the end of life, the culmination of one's efforts and ensuring a good end. Obviously, no one would want to ruin one's future and die in sufferings, pains and agonies. So Shiva is the cause which would indirectly propel a person to do things righteously and with due diligence. Again, one can reach an end only when there is a beginning, for without a start there cannot be an end. Therefore, Shiva indirectly is the 'cause of the beginning' so there can be an ultimate 'end'. Shiva inspires a person to make an auspicious beginning immediately with the avowed aim of finding eternal peace and happiness for one's self.

Shiva is the patron God of ascetics, hermits and mendicants because he symbolises a high degree of self-realisation, renunciation, dispassion, wisdom and enlightenment. When a man becomes enlightened and self-realised, he sees the futility of pursuing this world and decides to renounce it by taking the vow of Sanyas, or the life of renunciation

and detachment from the material world. This is literally a new beginning, a new life for him. It is a life of awakening and self-realisation which leads to liberation and deliverance as opposed to the earlier life of delusions and entrapments.

Shiva is the patron God of death implying the end of all delusions and bondages to this body and the material world, and the beginning of a new life spiritual freedom marked by self-realisation and enlightenment.]

15. Dharma (the virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety) personifies Rudra. The Jagat (the world, both the animate and the inanimate) is a symbolic representation of Vishnu. And Gyan (knowledge, wisdom and erudition) stands for Brahma¹ (15).

[Note—¹Dharma is like *Rudra* because it is very strict and uncompromising in its discipline. If any violation is observed in the implementation of the virtues represented by Dharma, such as the good virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety, then it would immediately get angry and cast death and destruction upon the perpetrators of evil and misdeed. It is uncompromising in this aspect even as death symbolised by Shiva is unrelenting in its job. Here Dharma is a personified form of all the good virtues of Rudra.

The living world is like *Vishnu* because it throbs and pulsates with vibrant and colourful life. It sustains itself in a perpetual manner if it is auspicious and righteous. Noble virtues are always at a premium and given due respect even today in this world, indicating that Vishnu is hidden in this world imperceptibly because the world would not accept the unrighteous and corrupt, and it treats with disdain everything not auspicious and according to the righteous code of conduct and ethics. The visible creation is self-sustaining. Once having come into existence, it moves ahead on its own steam. The father takes care of his son when he is young, and the son takes of the father when the latter grows old and infirm. The world creates its own resources, makes discoveries and innovations as and when the need arises, it builds, destroys and re-builds again in an endless cycle of creation, sustenance and destruction. This ability of the world to sustain itself is a personified virtue of Vishnu whose mandate is to support the creation on a perpetual basis.

Finally, since *Brahma* had created the Vedas, the repositories of all available knowledge needed for mankind, he is regarded as a personification of Gyan meaning knowledge, erudition, sagacity, wisdom and awareness of the truth.]

16. Therefore, a wise and enlightened man who repeats the great Mantra ‘Rudra Rudra’ and remembers the great Lord is symbolically worshipping all the Gods and repeating their Mantras. This helps him to overcome the evil effects of all sins and misdeeds (16).

[Note—In the view of what has been expounded in this Upanishad, the Mantra ‘Rudra-Rudra’ would deem to include the divine Mantras of all the Gods of the Trinity—i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Much like OM which is the universal Mantra for the supreme transcendental Brahm, this Mantra ‘Rudra-Rudra’ is the universal Mantra for all the Gods combined.]

17. [Now the Mantras used in the process of invoking Rudra and offering worship to him are being described from verse no. 17 to 23.]

‘I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing the male aspect of creation (i.e. the Viraat Purush), and goddess Uma representing the female aspect of creation (i.e. Prakriti, Mother Nature)’ (17).

17½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Brahma the creator (symbolising divine knowledge because he had created the Vedas), and goddess Uma representing Vaani (speech, the dynamic aspect Brahma because his knowledge is expressed by speech and the spoken words)' (17½).

18. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, and goddess Uma representing Laxmi, the goddess of material wealth (which is needed by Vishnu to carry on effectively his functions of sustenance and protection of this world)' (18).

18½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Surya, the Sun God (symbolising the light of knowledge and enlightenment), and goddess Uma representing Chaaya (shadow, symbolising the darkness that prevails if something intervenes between the creature and the Truth)' (18½).

19. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Som, the Moon God (symbolising the most prominent and reassuring presence of the supreme Lord in the otherwise foreboding and dark world of ignorance and delusions represented by the background of the night sky), and goddess Uma representing the Stars (symbolising the presence of numerous Gods and Goddesses who are not able to eliminate the darkness of the night inspite of being so numerous in number, whereas the single moon representing one Brahm can do so)' (19).

19½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Day (symbolising the divine light of self-realisation because one can see everything very clearly during the day time), and goddess Uma representing Night (because darkness of night symbolises Maya or delusions which is the other aspect of Brahm and has the opposite effect to that of the day which symbolises knowledge)' (19½).

[Note—Both the day and the night are the two aspects of the same Brahm. This verse is a clear indication of the fact that what appears to be 'dual' is actually the two sides of the same 'non-dual' entity. We can understand this phenomenon with the aid of a simple illustration. The earth rotates around its axis along with revolving round the sun. The former creates the day and the night, and the latter the seasons. Now, the appearance of day on a particular spot on the surface of the earth does not mean that it would undergo any fundamental change during the night, except for the absence of light and the lowering of temperature. No physical change has taken place on the surface of the earth; there is no change in its dimensions or constituents either in the day or in the night though the earth's contours appear to be different during the two phases. The same thing applies to the sky as well—the sky is always universally the same, but the day sky is very different from the night sky, and even during the course of the day it continuously changes its hues. The idea is that the external appearances are very misleading and not the real thing.

All the dichotomy and differences that appear in the world are due to delusions and ignorance of the reality and truth.]

20. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Yagya (a fire sacrifice or any other religious and auspicious activity done with sincerity and

commitment as a noble activity), and goddess Uma representing Vedit (the altar on which the sacred fire is worshipped and sacrifices made)' (20).

20½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Vahini¹ (the sacred fire element), and goddess Uma representing Swaha (the word pronounced at the time of making offerings to the fire; regarded as the wife of the Fire God)' (20½).

[Note—¹A related concept is the 'Vahini Yoga'. The Vahini Yoga deals with the activation of the vital wind/air with the fire/energy of life. This term is derived from a combination of two words, viz. 'fire' and 'yoga'. It simply means that two apparently independent units of life, i.e. 'wind' and 'energy', are brought together ("yoga" which means to being about a union or fusion) to activate life and its forces in creation.

For it, various techniques, processes, postures and exercises have been prescribed in Yoga, the chief among them being the activation of the Kundalini by Pranayam. The 'fire' required to heat and activates the 'Apan' wind and push it upwards comes from the 'Sun Chakra' or the 'Surya Chakra' (subtle energy center) located in the region of the navel. It is done by 'Surya Pranayam'. During this meditative practice, it is imagined that leaping flames are flaring up from the core of the sun symbolically residing in the navel of the Yogi, and these flames are virtually heating the Sushumna nerve (also called the pathway leading to Brahm) as well as the other vital winds present in the lungs, the heart, throat etc. By heating the lower end of the Sushumna nerve, which is akin to heating one end of a heating rod or coil, alongside the heating of the Kundalini and the Apan wind, the opening of this Sushumna nerve, which was up till now blocked, is unclogged and the subtle energy of the coiled Kundalini, which was hereto before trapped inside it, is released and pushed up by the Apan wind into the spinal cord through this Sushumna nerve where it rises up through this channel right up to the mind or the top of the head, mixing with it all other winds en-route, collecting all their impurities with it, much like the hot air above the surface of the earth developing into whirlwind and rising up into the atmosphere, taking up along with it the dust particles, dry leaves, twigs etc. as it goes up. This polluted wind is finally exhaled through the right and left nostrils during the process of Rechak. The rising of the Kundalini is similar to the rising of heated mercury in a thermometer. When the bulb is heated, the mercury shoots up. Here, when the Kundalini is heated, the energy trapped inside it rises up the Sushumna nerve.

Vahini Yoga is so-called because it stokes the latent fire energy lying dormant hitherto in the body of the spiritual aspirant by activating the vital winds, especially the warm Apan wind present in the lower end of the intestines, and utilizing its powerful force to stoke and activate the Kundalini, thereby heating it and releasing its subtle energy through the opening of its mouth covering the lower end of the Sushumna Naadi (nerve). This released energy then snakes up this Naadi and reaches the head, first at the root of the nose and center of the eyebrows and ultimately the top of the head at the point of the Brahm Randhra, the hair like slit on the skull, from which is finally escapes at the time of death of the ascetic, giving him liberation from the fetter of this body for ever.

Refer Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 38 and 107 of Sam Veda tradition, and Dhyandindu Upanishad, verse no. 66-68 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

21. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing the Vedas (the sacred body of divine knowledge), and goddess Uma representing Shastras (the scriptures such as the Upanishads and Purans that elaborate upon and explain the practical meaning of the Vedas and their philosophies)' (21).

21½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Vriksha (tree), and goddess Uma representing Valli (branches and shoots)' (22½).

[Note—In this context, refer verse no. 13.]

22. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Gandha (fragrances and scents emanating from flowers), and goddess Uma representing the Flower itself' (22).

[Note—A flower is so much sought after because of its attractive fragrance. Even if the flower is not visibly visible, its presence can be determined by its fragrance. So, if one knows what the true meaning of Rudra is, he can determine what actually to expect from the world, or what is the 'truth' in this world.]

22½. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Artha (the essence and meaning of any thing; the secret and essential meaning of any body of knowledge without the awareness of which the knowledge itself is worthless and useless; here symbolising the fact that the Supreme Being is the essence in this creation and is the only Truth worth knowing, and without which the creation would be worthless), and goddess Uma representing the Akshar (the letter that is the foundation of any language and the basis of words from which the entire language evolves symbolising the fact that once the Supreme Being created this world, the latter propagated on its own)' (22½).

[Note—The verse lays emphasis on the fact that the power of any text consisting of words formed out of letters lies on the proper understanding of its meaning. Mere 'letters' and 'words' would not give the desired results if one does not understand the meaning of what they intend to convey. Taken in a broader metaphysical perspective this verse implies that one would come to realise the supreme Truth only if one understands the esoteric meaning of what has been said in the scriptures. Similarly, a wise and enlightened man would see the Akshar, i.e. the imperishable, eternal, evergreen and infinite Brahm as the quintessential Artha or meaning and essence in everything in existence.]

23. 'I repeatedly bow most reverentially to Lord Rudra representing Linga (the image of Shiva in the form of a cylindrical structure raised above a circular platform), and goddess Uma representing the Peeth (the base on which this image is consecrated)' (23).

[Note—The concepts of Linga and Peeth have been elaborately described in Yoga Upanishads of Krishna Yajur Veda, viz. Yogshikha Upanishad Canto 1, verse nos. 131, 167-8, 170-175; Canto 2, verse nos. 5-11; Canto 5, verse nos. 8-12; and Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 27-28, 44-45.]

24. In this way, I bow to Shiva and his divine consort Parvati separately as well as in his different manifestations as separate Gods and Goddesses, and offer my worship to all of them individually and jointly (24).

25. Wherever a man is, he can do Japa (repetition of Mantras) with these Mantra dedicated to Lord Shiva. Even a man accused of killing a Brahmin can be absolved of his crimes and forgiven if he repeats these divine Mantra while standing in water (of a river etc.) (25).

[Note—This is just to indicate the power of these Mantras, and not to actually mean giving blanket pardon for such heinous crime as murder!]

26-27. When one comes to truthfully realise and understand the secrets of the enigmatic and most esoteric Divinity known as Brahm who is the base and shelter of all that exists, who is untainted by and beyond the purview and reach of any kind of confusions, doubts, suspense and perplexities arising out the concept of duality, who is an embodiment of 'Sat-chit-anand' (truth, consciousness and bliss), who is incomprehensible by the mind and intellect as well indescribable by the faculty of speech, who is eternal and universal, and who is supreme and transcendental Sublimity personified—oh Shuk (a reference to sage Shukdeo who is hearing this discourse), it is only then that one is able to understand and become enlightened about all the other secrets of creation.

This is because there is nothing separate from Brahm in creation; there is nothing beyond Brahm, and there is nothing that is not Brahm (26-27).

28-30. There are two basic types of Vidyas (knowledge) that one should know about—one is called the 'Paraa Vidya', and the other is known as 'Aparaa Vidya'¹.

Oh sage! The knowledge of the four Vedas such as Rik, Yajur, Sam and Atharva, and other forms of knowledge that come within the ambit of formal education such as the Kalpa (study of Vedic rituals), Vyaakaran (grammar), Nirukta (the exposition of the Vedas; commentaries on the scriptures), Chanda (poetry and its style of composition used in the scriptures), and Jyotish (astronomy and astrology based on mathematics and calculations)—all these come within the ambit of Aparaa Vidya. This is because they can be physically studied by anyone and expertise obtained in them by due diligence, high intelligence, steady concentration, constant practice and sincere perseverance. These are known texts and can be accessed by a sincere student. One can become expert in them and acquire fame and acclaim. They can be discussed, debated, taught and learnt. The Aparaa Vidya therefore relates to all types of knowledge except the one related to the Consciousness and the Atma. The latter is discussed below.]

On the other hand, the knowledge that enlightens one about the 'true self', the knowledge pertaining to the realisation of the Atma, the pure consciousness that forms this 'true self', is called the Paraa Vidya. [This is because it is not contained in any oral or written text. It has to come with enlightenment and realisation of the 'self' that obtained by sincerely putting into practice the essence of what has been learnt from the scriptures, and needs a lot of patience and deep insight. It is not restricted to literary expertise of the scriptures, and is beyond the scope of the Vedas though the latter teach about it. There have been numerous instances of great souls who had no formal education and initiation into the scriptures but were nevertheless most enlightened and self realised. The words of the Vedas can only help to show one the true thing, but that 'true thing' has to be experienced himself by one in order to truly understand about it. That is why it is repeatedly emphasised that once a person becomes self-realised he no longer needs to study the Vedas or perform any set of rites or conform to any set of rules. Once the aim is achieved, there is no longer the need of the vehicle that has brought one to one's destination. Refer Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 4-5; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 41-41 ½; Avadhut Upanishad, verse nos. 15 ½, 18; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 6.]

This essential entity called the Atma is super-natural, sublime, subtle and ethereal; it is supreme and transcendental; it is pure consciousness personified; it is the true self

and identity of the enlightened man; it is Brahm at the macrocosmic level. [Refer verse nos. 10-11.] (28-30).

[Note--¹The words *Paraa Vidya* refers to that knowledge which is transcendental and beyond the normal field of knowledge that can be acquired in this mundane world by study; the knowledge which relates to the supreme 'self' or the pure conscious Atma; the knowledge of things that is beyond the range of perception and comprehension. On the other hand, *Aparaa Vidya* means just the opposite of the *Paraa Vidya*, and it refers to that body of knowledge which can be acquired by diligent study of the scriptures and other texts.]

31-32. That (the Atma at the micro level of creation, and Brahm at the macro level of creation) is neither physically visible nor can it be physically grasped. It has no names, lineage, form and colour. It has no physical sense organs such as hands, legs and ears etc. [31].

It is eternal, constant, perpetual and everlasting (Nitya). It is all-pervading, all-encompassing, immanent, omnipresent, almighty, steady, immovable and magnanimous (Vibhu—an epithet applied to Vishnu and Shiva; the Supreme Being). It can go anywhere and lives everywhere; it is universal and there is no place that is inaccessible to it (Sarwagat). It is most microscopic and atomic in form and nature; nothing is smaller than it (Susuksham). It is without any faults, errors, shortcomings, blemishes and taints (Avyaya). It is the origin of all the elements as well as of all the living beings (Bhut-yoni).

Those who are intelligent, wise and enlightened as well resolute, steady and firm in their path and convictions (Dheer) see that supreme entity that is sublime and divine in their own inner self as their Atma, the pure and pristine Consciousness (31-32).

33. It is that universal and uniform Atma which is all-knowing and omniscient—for it knows the past, the present as well as the future besides knowing the inner thoughts of all (Sarwagyata), and it is an embodiment of all forms of knowledge that exist in this creation along with being their foundation and fount from where they sprout forth (Sarwavidyo). It personifies true knowledge, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment and skill of all kinds (Gyanmaye), as well as the grand virtues of austerity and penance (Tapa).

It is from such an astoundingly magnificent, eclectic and sublime Divinity (known as cosmic Consciousness) that this visible living world consisting of Annna (food) and its consumer (the living being who depends upon food for survival) have come into being (33).

34. This world which appears to be so real and true is present in this supremely magnificent and divine entity just like one imagines the presence of a serpent in a length of rope¹. [That is, it is out of ignorance, and delusions arising out of this ignorance, that one imagines the presence of the artificial and mortal world in Brahm which is infinitely true and non-artificial as well as imperishable and eternal much like imagining the presence of a snake in a harmless piece of rope and then building an imaginary aura of fear and horrors around it.]

But that divine and supreme entity is true and real (instead of being imaginary like the snake and perishable like the world). When one develops this wisdom and it gets firmly engrained in his inner self it is only then that the man attains the eclectic state of

spiritual freedom and deliverance from all ignorance and delusions, which lead to his ultimate emancipation and salvation (called Moksha or Mukti) (34).

[Note--¹The concept of *a snake and a rope* is used as a metaphor to describe how lack of awareness of the truth leads an ignorant man to imagine that a harmless piece of rope is a vicious snake and instill in him a horrible fear of life. References of this concept—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda: Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 17; Yogkundali Upanishad, verse no. 79-80; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-2, 22; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 48-49; Canto 6, verse no. 77. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda: Niralamba Upanishad, verse no. 14.]

35. The only way to break free from the fetters that tie the soul of the creature to this ensnaring world of delusions, artificiality and miseries is by the means of Gyan (i.e. with the aid of truthful knowledge and wisdom about the spiritual reality of the soul, its quintessential divine nature, and the truth about the Supreme Being), and not by doing deeds (even the auspicious and righteous ones in the hope that they can help break the shackle represented by this world)¹.

In order to achieve this end (i.e. in order to acquire this true Gyan), one should approach a self-realised and wise Guru (moral preceptor, teacher and guide) in the proper way to acquire this knowledge from him. The Guru should himself be well-versed in the scriptures (so that he can give proper and correct guidance and present a well considered and filtered version of them to the spiritual aspirant, instead of misleading him with wrong guidance and confusing him with contradictory advice, as that would be suicidal for the disciple), should himself have firm belief and conviction in Brahm, should himself be Brahm-realised, and should himself be extremely devoted and faithful to Brahm (because it is only then that he would have the necessary commitment, conviction and faith when he preaches about Brahm to his disciple) (35).

[Note—¹This is because deeds would be done in this world with the help of the gross body and their results would also appear in this world to be suffered from or enjoyed by the gross body. This body and the Atma, the soul, are different entities. The Atma is the pure conscious and the truthful 'self' of the creature, while the body is only a residence of this entity. So when the Atma thinks that one can find freedom by doing some kind of deed, it naturally has to depend upon the body because deeds in this gross world can only be done by the body using its sense organs. This involvement of the body would naturally have its consequences, the least of which is to make the Atma dependent on it, making the latter lose its much flaunted and much lauded virtue of freedom and independence. An Atma under obligations is bonded, and bondage of any kind can never give peace and happiness. This makes the deluded Atma living inside the body live like a prisoner inside a prison—it thinks that if it ever wishes to obtain auspicious end for it then it must take the help of the body to do good deeds so that the auspicious effects of these deeds would bless it (the Atma) with freedom. This fallacious conception makes it remain subservient to the body perpetually. So when the body suffers or enjoys the results of the deeds done by it, the Atma too gets involved; it also shares these sufferings and enjoyments. This vicious cycle is got rid of only when the Atma takes the shelter of Gyan—i.e. when it realises the 'truth' about its own self and the nature of its relationship with the body along with the fact involvement in deeds is a trap laid down by Maya, the maverick delusion creating powers of the Supreme Being designed to keep the creature involved in the affairs of the world so that the wheel of creation set in motion by the Lord himself keeps on rolling. That is why it is said that those who realise this great dilemma of creation are the fortunate ones whom the Lord himself wishes to give freedom and liberation from the

cycle of birth and death by making them wise and enlightened. For the rest, the wheel continues to rotate!

An enlightened man understands that his true 'self' is the Atma and that it is eternally free, divine and auspicious, so where is the question of doing something to obtain these ends? The Atma is not a gross entity like the body, but the divine ethereal Soul that need not worry about finding freedom by doing any physical deeds to obtain emancipation and salvation. It must not forget that the very root of all its present predicaments is that it had allowed its self in getting involved in doing deeds in its past life that led to this present situation. So why should it repeat the same mistake?

It is to be noted here that this observation is open to misinterpretation. What it actually means is that one should do deeds with the correct wisdom and spiritual perspective. The very fact which is stressed here that spiritual liberation is possible by Gyan implies that one would be aware of the theory of how to do deeds and still ensure spiritual freedom from its shackles. Briefly, it is do deeds with total detachment from them and neither expecting any rewards from them, whether good or bad. This presupposes that a man is aware of the eclectic view of metaphysics that it is the gross perishable body that actually does any deed and either enjoys or suffers from their consequences, and not the pure 'self' or the Atma which is however the true identity of the wise man. Only ignorant fools think that it is their body which is their 'self' and that this world is real and the true, and therefore they indulge in both of them as if that is the only thing for them to nourish and harbour.

So one need not run away from doing deeds, but rather inculcate the correct spiritual view in doing them. That way, a wise and enlightened man can benefit from both—he can fulfill his worldly obligations while remaining aloof and untainted from them much like the lotus flower that remains in a dirty pond but not a single drop of water sticks to it.

There are two terms used in the context of 'deeds'—one is Kṛiti and the other is Karma. 'Kṛiti' refers to the act of doing, accomplishments, making an effort, performing an act. 'Karma' refers to the work done or the deeds that are undertaken by a man. Both these terms are closely linked with each other and cannot be separated and understood correctly. If one does any deed, he is naturally taking some action. Whereas the term 'action' applies to the physical activity, the process of doing anything, the activity itself, the term 'deed' would apply to something someone has done, a notable achievement. An action is taken to accomplish success in one's endeavour, while the deed would describe in general terms the category under which one's actions can be classified—i.e. whether the action was good and auspicious, in which case we say that his deeds were good and he is remembered for his noble deeds, or bad and inauspicious in which case we say that his deed were so bad that he has left a scar on the society.

The word 'Karma' generally refers to deeds done by a man, the actions he has taken, to act upon or implementing one's firm faith and conviction, commitment and dedication towards any entity or object which one adores, admires, honours or reveres. The word 'Kṛiti' in the spiritual context with its various connotations refers to, inter alia, righteous deeds and actions involving self restraint, observance of strict codes of conduct and morality, and the ability to focus and concentrate the mind upon the supreme Truth and absolute Reality or Brahm while doing all the deeds or taking all the action in detached and dispassionate manner. One should be sincere and honest when he pursues any object or make efforts to obtain success in any enterprise, whether it is in the spiritual field or in the mundane worldly realm. Firm commitment, dedication, faith and singularity of purpose are the necessary ingredients for success in any action or deed. In other words, the 'Kṛiti' of a man helps to determine the degree of 'Nishtha' that he has. The way a man does anything will show how committed he is to his work—whether his heart is in it or not, whether he is doing it under duress or doing it willingly, how much faith and

devotion he has in both the action as well as its consequential result or reward. Half-hearted and disinterested actions can't be hidden. That is why it is said that a 'man is known by his deeds or actions'.

The best spiritual path to be followed is not to shy away from doing the deed itself but to remain detached from it and its results. The deed is not in itself entangling but it is the notion of 'I' or 'me' that is the chief culprit. When the man thinks that 'he' has done anything, he is bound to be proud of good deeds and their results, and ashamed of bad deeds and their evil results. But this thought is erroneous in itself because of many reasons. First, a wise man knows that the deeds are done by the gross body which is not his 'self', as this 'self' is the pure consciousness known as the Atma residing in this body which is definitely different and separate from the body. Therefore the deed cannot be done by the 'me'. Second, all deeds are done in a physical gross world of material sense object that is artificial and illusive. Therefore, the deeds and their results are like the water in a mirage—artificial and illusive. Third, the results are also suffered or enjoyed by the gross body consisting of sense organs of perception and action, and not by the Atma. Thus, why should the Atma become overworked by something that does not concern it?

In brief, only as long as the person thinks that he is the 'doer' of deeds is he accused of doing it, but if he mentally remains detached and disassociated from them he is free from the deeds and their results; he can rightly claim that he has not done anything. So, mental detachment, dispassion and non-involvement in any deed whatsoever is the clue of doing the deeds but remaining free from their consequences. It is the mind that is the cause of all attachments and involvements, and if the mind is properly reined in, the rest is easy to follow.

Another way prescribed in the scriptures is to do the deeds dispassionately and as a service to the supreme Lord or Brahm. When the deeds are done for the Master, there is no question of the doer having any right over the result just like the labourer who works in the field of his master has no right on the produce of his labour. He cannot say that since I have toiled so much, the harvest is mine. This would automatically create a psychological detachment from the deed because one has no expectation of either enjoying its fruits or suffering from its evil consequences, such as an abundant harvest or failure of crop in this present example.

The concept of 'deeds' is a central theme in many an Upanishads, some of which are as follows. The Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60.

The Kathrudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 13 asserts that the supreme transcendental Brahm or the quintessential spiritual Truth of creation as well as Mukti or liberation and deliverance is not possible by doing various deeds in this mortal world. This same idea is endorsed in Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 35 which asserts that deeds or Karma do not provide the Atma of the creature with liberation and deliverance from this world but it is Gyan (truthful knowledge of the spiritual truths) that do.

The 'Karma Chakra' or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences has been described in the Shwetashwatar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3. The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 4/7. The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. The Niralambo-panishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The Sarvasaar Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds

These concepts and the fact that a creature's destiny depends upon the deeds done by him have been elaborately described elsewhere also in (i) Rig Veda's Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 33, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2,14-16, etc.; Adhyatma Upanishad, verse nos. 57-58, 66; (iii) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Canto 7, Section 21; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 7; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse nos. 20-26.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds.]

36-37. The Guru should impart the eclectic knowledge that would enlighten his disciple about the oneness of the Atma and Brahm, called the 'Paraa Vidya'. [Refer verse nos. 28-31.]

A spiritual aspirant who is able to witness and experience the secret presence of the imperishable and eternal Brahm inside his own inner self (as his pristine pure and self-illuminated consciousness known as the Atma) is able to untie the great spiritual knot representing misconceptions, ignorance and delusions about the truth and reality pertaining to his own 'self' as well as the rest of the world, and consequentially obtain freedom from its shackling effects. This helps him to receive the reward of spiritual freedom by way of realising the eternal essence of 'Shiva'—the imperishable and infinite bliss and ecstasy that comes with realising the eternal truth about the Atma and Brahm, the knowledge which itself is truthful, beautiful and auspicious, hence 'Shiva' in its nature, contents and essence.

Those desirous of reaching the ultimate fount of eternal spiritual bliss and ecstasy, the citadel of spiritual peace and tranquility, the pinnacle of unbound spiritual happiness and joys, should endeavour to acquire this knowledge and unfold this secret as described herein above (36-37).

38. The ethereal vibrations of the cosmos that resonates imperceptibly in the entire being of the living creature (in the form of the resonance of the divine Mantra OM¹ as revealed during meditation) is like the stringed bow, while the Atma (the consciousness and life factor in the body that enables a man not only to live but to live with intelligence, conscience, wisdom and enlightenment that would help him to hear this divine resonance of cosmic Consciousness in his inner self and personally witness the presence of Brahm inside his own self) is regarded as the arrow mounted on this bow². A wise and erudite man uses this to aim at Brahm (the supreme transcendental Truth and Reality of creation; the ultimate divine 'self' in the context of the creation as a whole; the Supreme Being who is the protector and guardian Angel of the spiritual aspirant; the ultimate spiritual goal of life that can give permanent liberation and deliverance to the soul from the endless cycle of birth and death).

Therefore, one should not be apathetic towards this spiritual goal and pursue it relentlessly, sincerely, and without any indolence or carelessness.

Only like a person who concentrates upon the target can ever hope to successfully pierce it with the arrow, only a sincere and diligent person who is steady and relentless in his spiritual pursuit can ever hope to reach and realise Brahm, and not otherwise (38).

[Note—¹The Mantra OM pertains to Pranav, the cosmic transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm. During meditation and contemplation (Yoga and Dhyān), OM is used as a universal Mantra to focus one's attention and harness the divine energy of the cosmic Consciousness. Like a kite riding a wind or a ship riding a high tide, the individual's atomic 'self' called the Atma rides atop the crest of the cosmic sound waves that the repetition of OM generates in his inner self to reach the top of the head, in the region called the Agya Chakra located between the two eyebrows where the Atma experiences an extreme sense of bliss and contentedness that makes it realise its true nature. As the repetition continues, the sound waves gather more energy and finally the Atma reaches the top of the head, in the region called the Brahm Randhra which is a hair-like slit in the skull (cranium) which opens up due to these cosmic vibrations and allows the Atma to escape from the prison of the body for ever. This is called the 'Kaivalya' Mukti or the final liberation and deliverance of the creature.

The entire process of how this comes about has been described in Yoga Upanishads. For instance, the Kshuriko-panishad, verse nos. 18-20, the Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 27, the Yog Kundali Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 12-17, the Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 103-106—all of them describe the concept of obtaining Mukti or liberation and deliverance by the Pran escaping through the Brahm Randhra.

The vibrations caused by the constant chanting of OM create such an ambience of tranquility that it completely overwhelms the spiritual aspirant so much so that he thinks of nothing else. This is like the surging waves of the ocean which just splashes on the shore and drenches everything present there. Just like music is soothing for the nerves, the different notes and tones of OM massage the aspirant's nerves and calm him down. There are number of Upanishads that describe the divine value of OM Mantra and how it akin to the cosmic music played by the creator at the cosmic level. Some of them are the following—(a) Rig Veda—Naad Bindu Upanishad. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli (Canto) 1, Anuvak (sub-canto) 8; Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 2, 4, 24-25, 31-32; Dhyān Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 2, 9-18 (which narrates how each letter of OM stands for different aspects of creation), 37, 102; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 6; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 136-139; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 2-12, 69-71 ½ which narrates how each letter of OM stands for different aspects of creation; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 70; Shukar Rahashya Upanishad, verse no. 20 describes how OM is used for the purpose of ritualistic worship according to the Tantra philosophy involving Anga Nyas, Shandanga Nyas etc.; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 42-43 ½ describe how the three states of existence (waking, dreaming and deep sleep) and the three types of bodies (gross, subtle and causal) came into existence as manifestations of the three letters A, U and M of the word OM. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Taarsar Upanishad, Canto 2, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-7; Hans Upanishad, verse nos. 6-17. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad verse no. 74-81, 85-88; Pranavo Panishad which has only 13 verses dedicated to OM. (d) Atharva Veda—Ram Tapiniopanishad, canto 3, verse no.5-9.

²The metaphor or analogy of the bow and arrow—refer also to Mundak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse nos. 3-4.]

39. The target represented by Brahm is present everywhere, the arrow represented by the Atma is also present everywhere¹, but it is only when the archer represented by the spiritual aspirant develops the same degree of highly evolved, highly wisened and highly

enlightened views about the universality and uniformity of Brahm and Atma—that is, only when he sees ‘non-duality’ in creation and observes nothing but his targeted Brahm everywhere, seeing Brahm and nothing but Brahm in the entire creation—is he eligible and competent to reach his spiritual target of reaching and realising Brahm. In other words, it then becomes very easy for him to aim for and realise the ultimate Truth and Divinity in creation that is the beautiful, auspicious and eternal entity known as Shiva. [Here Shiva and Brahm are treated synonymously.] (39).

[Note—¹This is a highly evolved spiritual view in the field of metaphysics and marks the culmination of enlightenment. A true self-realised and Brahm-realised person is expected to have a universal view of the Atma, the view that the Atma or pure consciousness is a non-dual entity that pervades the entire creation uniformly, and that the individual Atma and the cosmic Atma known as Brahm are the same thing. The same consciousness resides in all the living beings as their individual ‘self’ or Atma as well as in the rest of the creation as the irrefutable and universal cosmic ‘truth’ or Brahm. When this wisdom dawns upon the aspirant, he need not go anywhere to search this Atma or Brahm because it is present inside his own being, in his own inner self. He need not offer worship to any separate God who lives in some far away heaven, as the supreme God is residing within himself. Thus, he sees Brahm everywhere in this creation, and this marks the pinnacle of spiritual achievement for the aspirant. This is indeed the great teaching of the Upanishads.

We can visualise how this comes about by a simple example from day to day life. When one wishes to hear a particular radio station, he has to tune in to the right frequency by tweaking the knob on his radio receiver. The radio waves of all the broadcasting stations are omnipresent in the atmosphere and saturate it. When a person switches on the radio set, he hears so many of them, but he immediately neglects them and navigates through the dial to search for his favourite station. Similarly, in the case of Mantras too there are so many of them, and each relates to one aspect of Divinity personified as some God. But if one wishes to have access to the Supreme Being, the Mantra OM is meant for him. So it is only when the Atma focuses on OM that it can have access to the supreme Brahm. We cannot expect to hear station ‘A’ by tuning in to station ‘B’!]

40. That Supreme Being whose divine abode is far beyond the reach of the Sun and the Moon because their light cannot reach it (or in other words, this abode is so magnificently bright and blindingly dazzling that the light of the sun and the moon fade in comparison to its brilliance, and therefore are utterly insignificant there)¹, where even the all-pervading and omnipresent wind or air element cannot go (i.e. it is far away in the deep bowls of the cosmos, much beyond the solar system and the world as seen by humans), and which is even inaccessible to the different Gods who are deemed to be eternal and all-powerful (implying that even the Gods cannot know fully about the Supreme Being)—the same Lord reveals himself when the devotee (spiritual aspirant) seeks him and remembers him with due devotion and sincerity.

The Lord then manifests himself for such an aspirant in all his pristine pure and gloriously illuminated divine form that is still invisible to others. [That is, the Supreme Being known as Brahm reveals himself as the self-illuminated Atma or pure consciousness that is present inside the inner self of the enlightened and self-realised aspirant which only he can witness. This Atma is invisible and imperceptible in the conventional sense of seeing and perceiving anything in this material world. That is why when Brahm reveals himself to the spiritual aspirant, no one else can see the Lord. It is

very personal experience and it cannot be shared by others. The very fact that such Brahm-realised holy men effuse a divine glow in the form of a halo around them, and possess some unique traits and supernatural powers not otherwise possible in this world, delineates them from the rest of the ordinary persons.] (40).

[Note—¹This statement is intended to remove any confusion in the mind of the reader regarding where the abode of Brahm is. Earlier verses have cited the instance of the Sun and the Moon (verse nos. 3-4), the animate and the inanimate world (verse no. 9) and the three worlds consisting of the terrestrial world, the nether world and the heavenly world (verse no. 13) as the possible places where the supreme Brahm can be searched and found. Does it mean that Brahm is localized to these places only, because it creates the impression that the Supreme Being is to be found in the realm of the solar system only where the sun and the moon and the known forms of life such as those known to be present upon earth or seen from earth are present? Does it mean that the rest of the creation is devoid of Brahm? This doubt is sought to be removed by this verse. The solar system is merely like a hair on the body of the Viraat Purush, and there are countless such solar systems in varying degrees of development in his vast colossus body that has ‘infinity’ and ‘fathomless-ness’ as its dimension. Since the seers or sages who had envisioned the grand philosophy of the Upanishads had lived on earth, their conceptualization was based on whatever observations they could make from earth. But they were wise people, and so to remove any possibility of error creeping in the broader vision of things they had in mind, they first said something then modified what they said to encompass even those things that were beyond even their own imagination—to stress the point that their instances and metaphors should not be taken too literally but understood in the correct spirit. Words have their own limitations and they cannot butt and bound something that even the scriptures declare as being beyond description and definitions. In the present instance for example, the light of the Sun and the Moon do not reach the other end of the universe to light it; there are numerous such solar systems scattered in the vast bosom of the universe. Each star is a sun in its own right, lighting its own realm, and if the ‘Sun’ is deemed to be the ‘eye’ or ‘manifestation of transcendental Consciousness’ then it obviously follows that these far-away stars or Suns are also Brahm revealed in all these forms.

Therefore, ‘Brahm’ is not limited to where humans or animal and plant life exists in the universe, but is present even in the farthest and the remotest corners of creation as far a field as the universe stretches, and even beyond it so that it forms the outer boundary of this entire creation. That is why the Upanishads treat Brahm as an equivalent to the sky element which has no limits and which is present anywhere wherever there is creation in any form imaginable. In fact the word ‘sky’ refers to the infinite ‘space’ which has no limits and boundaries! Refer—Krishna Yajur Veda’s Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 40, Ekachar Upanishad, verse no. 12, Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 19-23, Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 38 in this context.]

41. [Verse nos. 41-45 espouse the philosophy of uniformity and non-duality of the soul, the philosophy central to Advaitya Vedanta. It establishes why and how there is no difference between the Jiva, the living being, and Ishwar, the Supreme Being.]

In this tree represented by the creature’s body, two birds live. One is the Jiva (the individual), and the other is the Ishwar (the supreme Lord). Out of these two, the Jiva enjoys and suffers from the consequences of the deeds done, while the Ishwar remains a neutral spectator or witness to that deed. [The Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 4, verse

nos. 6-7 uses this example of two birds to beautifully describe the relationship between the creature and the supreme Brahm. The metaphor of the tree is also used magnificently to describe this creation in Katha/Kathvalli Upanishad, Canto 2, Valli 3.] (41).

[Note—The *Jiva* refers to that aspect of consciousness that makes the creature think that it is the ‘doer’ of deeds, and therefore is liable for its results, both good and bad. Such a deluded individual thinks that the body is his ‘self’ and therefore what the body does is being done by ‘him’. Such a person would naturally be affected by what is produced by the deed done because all actions have a reaction, and since he regards himself as the doer he must face the results as well.

On the other end of the thinking process is the eclectic view that the ‘self’ is not the body but the pure consciousness known as the Atma, and this Atma is separate from the body and it does not have anything to do with the deeds done by the body because the Atma is merely a temporary resident of the body. Besides this point, there is an element called ‘conscience’ in all individuals which tells them what is good and what is not. This conscience is the voice of the Atma inasmuch as it always tells the person about things which are righteous and auspicious and noble. Whenever the man indulges in worldly things or sinful acts, this conscience would warn him, even though for a fleeting moment, that the path he has chosen is not going to be conducive for his long-term good. This voice of the Atma, so-called, is the voice of the Ishwar referred to here in this verse. In other words, the consciousness revealing itself as the conscience is the *Ishwar*.

There is a very fine and almost imperceptible difference between the terms Ishwar and Brahm. While the word Ishwar generally refers to the supreme Lord of creation worshipped as a God by his devotees, the term refers to the cosmic Consciousness that is the ‘soul’ of this Ishwar. This ‘supreme, cosmic Consciousness’ is called Brahm; it is the ultimate Truth and the quintessence of everything of any worth in existence. In the individual creature this Brahm resides as his own ‘self’ or Atma. Therefore, Brahm is Ishwar because the former is the Lord of creation, and Ishwar is Brahm because it is Consciousness personified in its macrocosmic revelation. Practically, they can be used synonymously.

Since the Atma is a manifestation of Brahm and the sovereign residing inside the body of the individual, it is also called the Ishwar residing inside the heart or the inner self of the creature. This view is proved by the fact that the sublime and subtle Atma shows characteristics special to Brahm, the Ishwar, the Supreme Being, such as its eternity, imperishability, self-illumination, wisdom, enlightenment, all-pervading and all-knowing abilities etc.—qualities that the gross body lacks. This is affirmed in verse no. 44 below.

Therefore, this ‘Ishwar’, the resident Supreme Being or Brahm in the form of the conscious Atma, does not do anything and remains neutral towards the deeds done by the ‘Jiva’, the individual who thinks that the body is his ‘self’. Thus, the former (Ishwar) is merely a witness to the deeds while the latter (Jiva) is neck-deep in them.

It would be noted that the difference between the Jiva and the Ishwar lies in the level of erudition, enlightenment and wisdom by which things are perceived by the individual person. An ordinary man thinks that he is known as an individual because of the body, that the body is his ‘self’ and identity, and therefore he is subjected to all the characteristic features and qualities associated with the body—i.e. that he would die, that he takes a birth, that he suffers from this and that, that he does deeds and therefore must either enjoy the rewards of these deeds or suffer from their consequences, that this world and its enchantments are real, are meant for him and therefore must be enjoyed, and so on and so forth.

On the other end of the spectrum is the enlightened view that one's true identity is not the body but the soul or the pure conscious Atma which is the ethereal spirit that is imperishable and eternal, that this spirit neither takes a birth nor dies, that it is uniform and stable under all circumstances, and therefore it neither gets agitated or excited, nor depressed and dejected by circumstances or as the result of deeds, that it is untainted, untarnished and pristine pure, and therefore not affected by the various faults associated with this murky world which can only influence the external body and not its resident Atma, and so on and so forth.

The body is regarded as a tree on which both these birds live to indicate that the same body can lead to spiritual entrapment for one person while providing emancipation and salvation to another. The same body is used by a pervert man to commit horrendous sins and torment others no end, and a holy person uses the body to alleviate their sufferings and serve humanity selflessly. The same body can be a snare trapping the Atma, and it can also be a means of its liberation and deliverance. If a man gets involved with the world and uses his body as a means to gratify himself, he would be shackled to it, while if he uses it to study the scriptures and perform righteous deeds in an auspicious manner without getting involved in them and their results, he would be using the body to achieve liberation and deliverance. Even Yoga Upanishads emphasise the fact that meditation and contemplation is an important instrument by which the Atma can find its liberation, called 'Kaivalya Mukti' by doing various Yoga exercises, and these can only be done with the help of the body. So, in brief, it is the way one handles anything that is of greater importance rather than the thing itself.]

42. The Maheshwar (the great Lord; the truthful 'self' representing Brahm; the Atma as a representative of Brahm) does not enjoy or suffer from the consequences of deeds done by the Jiva. The former is merely a witness of everything. [That is, the sublime Atma does not have to suffer from what the gross body does. It just watches silently in a dispassionate way the deeds of the body.]

In fact, the difference between the Jiva and Brahm is artificial and is created by Maya—i.e. by ignorance-incited delusions about one's true nature and essence. This knowledge itself is like an illumination that can remove this dark shadow of Maya¹. [Refer verse no. 44.] (42).

[Note--¹That is, basically there is no difference between the individual creature and the supreme Brahm because the true identity of the individual is his eternal and enlightened Atma, the pure consciousness or soul residing in his gross body, and not the external perishable body that is gross, inert and inane to the extreme. This Atma of the individual creature is the microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic Atma that is the essence and the principal entity of creation known as Consciousness, and therefore both are the same. What pervades in the entire creation also pervades in one's own body; what gives life to the rest of the creation also gives life to the individual creature. This is the considered eclectic non-dual view of the Upanishads. It is out of ignorance of the fact that the creature thinks that the supreme Lord is somewhere else in the heaven and has to be sought outside his own self. It is out of ignorance of the Truth about one's true 'self' that a creature thinks that he is a Jiva, a living being with a gross body, who is different and separate from Maheshwar, the great Ishwar, the supreme Lord of creation. This delusion and false conception is the result of Maya.

Once the creature becomes enlightened and wisened of this fact, once he realises that the difference between himself and Brahm is artificial and illusionary because his 'true self' is not the gross body but the ethereal cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma that is universal and uniform everywhere in creation, and that his own Atma is a microcosm

of the omnipresent cosmic Atma that uniformly pervades in each form and each unit in creation, he immediately begins to see that there is no fundamental difference between his 'true self' and the supreme 'Self' of creation.

Hence, this knowledge that the dichotomy created between the Jiva and the Ishwar is an artificial creation of Maya is an awareness that would immediately lift the veil of delusions created by ignorance of the 'truth and reality'. It is like the illumination provided by the light of a candle of knowledge that cuts through the darkness of ignorance and the attendant phantoms and ghosts stalking the creature and horrifying him no end.

Refer verse no. 43 below that explicitly clarifies this point.]

43. Just like the Ghatakash and Mathakash (the space present inside a hollow pot, and the space inside the building of a monastery respectively) are imaginary and artificial segregations or partitions of the same Akash (the sky and its infinite stretch of space) which is fundamentally immutable, indivisible, uniform and universally all-pervading and all-encompassing by nature, the Supreme Being known as Brahm too is imagined to have two separate existences as Ishwar and Jiva. In fact, this artificial and imaginary distinction between the two manifestations of the same non-dual and immutable Supreme Being (Brahm) as the Ishwar and Jiva is due to ignorance about the truth and reality (43).

[Note—This is because both the Jiva and Ishwar are two sides of the same coin—one is at the gross and micro level of creation, and the other is at the sublime and macro level of creation, inspite of the fact that both have the same consciousness living inside them. That is, whereas Ishwar is the all-powerful, ethereal, macrocosmic, all-pervading and all-encompassing gross body of Brahm which has no physical barriers, the Jiva is the microcosmic gross body of the same Brahm as the individual creature with limitations of the gross body. The Ishwar is the nearest analogue to Brahm inasmuch as it is eternal, infinite, sublime, subtle, invisible, macrocosmic, universal and all-pervading in Nature, while the Jiva is mortal, gross and limited to his gross body. Both have the pure consciousness known as the soul or the Atma central to their existence. In the case of Ishwar, it is 'cosmic Consciousness', and in the case of the Jiva it is 'individual consciousness'. So the difference between the duo—the Jiva and Ishwar—is only based on an erroneous perception of the truth. Once the correct perception is taken into consideration, the dichotomy vanishes—and this is called enlightenment and self-realisation. That is, if the 'truthful' identity of both is 'consciousness' and this consciousness is Brahm, then it follows that Jiva and Ishwar are the same. In other words, a self-realised individual who has known his true self is like an Ishwar personified.]

44. In fact, the consciousness personified as the Atma is nothing but Shiva (the auspicious beautiful Truth itself) personified. It is the level of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment that whether or not one distinguishes between a Jiva and Ishwar; actually there is no basic difference between them. [This is because the Jiva has a predominance of delusions and ignorance in it making it unaware of its glorious and divine true 'self', whereas Ishwar is the pinnacle of wisdom and enlightenment who knows this fact. Therefore, if the Jiva also becomes wise and enlightened then he would too become one like Ishwar. In this context, refer verse no. 42.]

If there was a real difference between them then their basic conscious nature would be compromised with. [Since a living being has consciousness in it, it is not inanimate like rock or tree, and therefore it is different from the inanimate forms of life in this creation. The difference between a Jiva and a tree has been explained by sage

Yagyavalkya in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 3, Brahman 9, verse no. 28/1-7. But a lowly fallen man is not different from those who are wise, enlightened and noble except for the degree of these auspicious virtues possessed by them. Both have the same body showing the same functions, both take a birth and die, both reproduce and eat and drink, but here the similarity ends. The mental and intellectual setups of both are as varied as the sky and the earth. It is the level of erudition and wisdom or Gyan that decides whether a person treats himself as a Jiva or as Brahm personified as his Atma or pure conscious 'self'.] (44).

45. The apparent difference between the two categories of consciousness present in the Jiva and the Ishwar is dependent upon the level of their Gyan, i.e. their spiritual awakening, wisdom, enlightenment and conscience factor. The difference is due to the dominance of gross negative values in the former, and the sublime and noble values in the latter. So to say that 'the pure consciousness' has two types of existences—one as a Jiva and the other as Ishwar—is imaginary and due to ignorance of the absolute reality and quintessential truth about consciousness. And this truth is the fact that the 'consciousness' in reality is a uniform, universal, immutable, non-divisible and non-dual entity. Therefore the apparent dichotomy is due to the veil of ignorance about its immaculate pristine pure nature that surrounds the creature like a dark cloud of ignorance and delusions, leading it to believe that the Jiva (the 'true self' of the living being as his pure consciousness known as the Atma) is separate from the supreme Brahm (who is the supreme 'Self' and cosmic transcendental Consciousness) known as Ishwar, the supreme Lord of creation.

The very fact that one sees two entities in what is essentially non-dual and immutable itself shows the low level of intellectual development and the deluded mind of the creature that sees this difference. [It is like the case of hallucination when one sees two images of the same object with two eyes whereas the two eyes ought to be seeing a combined three-dimensional single image of that object. It's like seeing many images of the sun or the moon in many pans full of water and thinking that there are as many suns or moons in the sky as the number of images seen. Refer Amrit Naad Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 12 which precisely describes this phenomenon.] (45).

46-47. The uniformity and oneness of the consciousness can be arrived at by intelligent application of the mind so that it can sift through and analyse available evidence and make intelligent deductions from it by applying wisdom, logic and the elimination process.

Once this uniformity and non-dual nature of the consciousness is established (i.e. once the wise man knows that the only thing of worth in whatever that exists in this world has the same basic nature and essence known as 'consciousness', that there is no duality and dichotomy in the world in the real sense because its basic worth lies not in its gross form but in the consciousness present in it, and that whatever duality that apparently exists is due to total stupidity and ignorance of the truth) the wise and enlightened man becomes free from all sorts of mental confusions and emotional agitations. He no longer remains tied to the shackles of delusions and ignorance¹.

He finds access to the eternal fount of extreme beatitude and felicity that comes with obtaining the essence of or knowing the truth of 'Shiva' which is non-dual and only one of its kind² (46-47).

[Note—¹The intrinsic value of a golden ornament lies in the quantity and purity of its gold content rather than its external form. Would anyone pay the same amount of money for a decorative piece of jewelry if he knows that it is not gold, but brass? Both gold and well-polished brass look almost alike to a naïve person; even the quality and purity of gold is not possible to be judged easily by a lay person. But all his confusions and doubts about the true value of the ornament are removed when its value is judged by an expert gold-smith. Likewise, 'Gyan' (truthful knowledge, wisdom, erudition, information and enlightenment) tells a man what the real value and worth of the world is, what the 'reality and truth' of this world of uncountable sense objects and astounding charms is, what spiritual value does it have? It is then the man becomes 'enlightened' and sees the reality behind the fascinating external façade of pompous artificiality and illusive charms. He realises that everything is perishable and transient, and therefore of no actual and eternal value. He discovers that the only thing of any spiritual worth in this world is the 'consciousness' much like the gold in the ornament cited above. It is the true secret of life and existence; it is eternal and imperishable. When this happens, the darkness of delusions and ignorance are dispelled, and instead light of enlightenment shines through to illuminate the entire existence for the spiritual aspirant.

²The word Shiva refers to the eclectic divine virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, beauty, piety, holiness, renunciation, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, purity and truth. When a person becomes wise enough to rise above the mundane and lowly existence of remaining engrossed in worldly affairs of the sense objects and self-gratification, a selfish life which lacks broadness of vision and long-term welfare of the soul, when he gets to see the 'truth' in the light of wisdom and enlightenment, it is only then that he begins to see things from a higher pedestal, with a broader perspective of existence and the truthful nature of the soul and its future, and thereby develop a panoramic view of existence. It is like seeing earth from space when all the warts on the earth's surface—the mighty mountains and the meandering rivers, the green fields and the dry deserts, the artificial boundaries that separate nations and states—vanish. What is seen is a beautiful blue ball hanging from nowhere in the vast dark void of space. One then begins to wonder why men fight each other for a yard of land and cut each others throat for a gram of gold!

Thus, a wise man begins the search for the 'truth and reality' by studying the scriptures and consulting wise men. He trains his mind to gather all information and then analyse it to intelligently arrive at conclusions that are not based on hearsay, whims and misconceptions but on sound ground and reasoning. He understands the essence of the fundamental tenets of the scriptures and sees the eclectic, quintessential and undeniable spiritual 'truths' encoded in them. He applies this learning in practice and realises their true worth along with discovering who he himself actually is. He then becomes 'Shiva' personified; he has discovered the 'Shiva' principle, or the grand irrefutable Truth of creation. He has accessed the magnificently grand virtues that are the hallmarks of divinity and holiness which are collectively called 'Shiva'.]

48. The supreme divine entity (Brahm) is the ultimate Truth and pure Consciousness that not only uniformly pervades in this entire creation but is also the base and foundation of this creation; it is the support and succour of this entire creation; it is where this creation finds its final resting place in peace.

Wise and enlightened men become free from all sorrows and miseries (i.e. they become restful and peaceful) by realising the truth of the eclectic statement 'I am that supreme Divinity known as Shiva or Brahm personified'¹ (48).

[Note--¹Here the word 'I' refers to the Atma and not the gross body of the man, and the word 'divinity' refers to the Supreme Being represented by Brahm, the transcendental cosmic Truth and Consciousness as well as Shiva who is an embodiment of such grand eclectic virtues as auspiciousness, righteousness, holiness, divinity, renunciation, wisdom, erudition, enlightenment, purity and truth. Such wise men have come to the conclusion that their 'true self' is as glorious and divine as the supreme Divinity and Truth itself, and thus they become free from all sorrows and perplexities created by not knowing their high pedigree. Now they would no longer have to run after some distant God in order to worship him for his blessings, or worry for their death and what would happen to them after death as they have realised that they, in the form of their Atma, are basically immortal and eternal like the supreme Brahm, and as auspicious, truthful and holy as Shiva. They are not concerned with pursuing the material objects of the world any longer, and whatever comes their way are gladly accepted by them to sustain life happily and contentedly while they live in this world. Therefore there is no cause for anxiety and frustration, or for any ill-will and hatred and jealousy. They are fully contented and fulfilled. They might be living in a physical world surrounded with miseries and pain, but are so detached from it internally that they remain totally unaffected by anything pertaining to the world just like the case of the lotus flower living in a dirty pond remaining unaffected by the filth and muck that surrounds it. It's indeed a life of spiritual Utopia.]

49. Only those persons who have cleansed their inner self of all taints and blackening soot created by Maya (representing all sorts of delusory and ignorance-based conceptions and misunderstandings pertaining to the actual reality and truth) are able to see the reflection or image of the Supreme Being in their inner self. This image is as glorious as its principle who has his own self-created body (i.e. who does not live in some other body like the creature's Atma which lives in another gross body when it takes birth in this world), is self-illuminated, and is the universal witness and observer of everything in this creation (which implies that he is present everywhere, inside and outside of everything, at the same time, and also in all phases of time such as the past, the present and the future).

Therefore it follows that those who are covered by the veil cast by Maya and tainted by its evil shadow of deceit and illusions can never hope to see this glorious Divinity shining in their inner self (49).

[Note—It is like the case of seeing the image of the sun or the moon in a mirror. If the mirror is clean, the image would be perfect, and the dirtier or the more tarnished the mirror is the more unclear and distorted would the image be.]

50. A wise and enlightened ascetic who is truly self-realised and knows the true nature and form of his Atma (as described herein above) has obtained spiritual maturity, and for such an ascetic there is no going anywhere. He is deemed to have found liberation and deliverance for his soul while he is still alive, and even after death he does not have to go anywhere else as his Atma simply dissolves and merges with the supreme Atma of the cosmos present everywhere in this creation¹ (50).

[Note--¹That is, he does not go to any heaven or take another birth in a higher rung of creation. For him the heaven, which is the abode of the Supreme Being, is located in his very own 'self' where his Atma resides. He does not take any birth because he comes to

know that the Atma is eternal and imperishable, and therefore the question of it first dying and then taking a new birth does not arise. Besides this, he knows that the Atma does not do any deeds and neither is it involved in the deeds done by the body. His Atma remains free from the consequences of these deeds, the primary cause for one having to take any new birth according to the principle of deeds and their consequences which compels a creature to take another birth in order to enjoy or suffer from the unrequited results of the deeds done in the previous life.]

51. Even as the sky does not go anywhere or comes from anywhere (because it is present universally and uniformly everywhere), the wise and self-realised person who has known the truth of the Atma as his 'true self' also does not have to go anywhere or come from anywhere. [That is, he neither dies and goes to heaven or hell, nor takes another birth for the simple reason that the Atma is universal, uniform, eternal, imperishable, infinite, all-pervading, omnipresent and steady as the sky element.] (51).

52. An exalted and self-realised sage, who is wise and enlightened enough to know for certain who the Supreme Being known as Brahm is, has the spiritual grasp of the Truth and Reality and therefore is established in his own 'self' which is Brahm personified. Hence, he becomes as divine and sublime as the Sat-Chit-Anand Brahm, i.e. he becomes a living embodiment of such glorious virtues as Truth, Consciousness, and Bliss and Ecstasy unbound. In brief, he becomes one like Brahm himself.

This is what this Upanishad affirms. This is its teaching. Amen! (52).

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3.4 Krishna Yajur Veda tradition's Skanda Upanishad—

Extolling the principles of Non-duality, this Upanishad stresses that there is no basic difference between Hari (Vishnu, the sustainer) and Shiva (the concluder), on the one hand, and Shiva and the Jiva (the living being) on the other. In other words, the three are one and the same; they are like the three corners of a triangle known as creation. They are manifestations of the same divine non-dual entity known as Brahm which has assumed three distinct forms to perform three distinct functions in this creation. These facts have been clearly brought out in verse nos. 8-9 and 4-6 respectively.

This Upanishad is a sort of an extension of the Dakshina-Mukhi Upanishad which says that Shiva is the only ultimate truthful Lord called Brahm, and therefore Shiva and the Atma of a creature, the Jiva-Atma, are one and the same. This Upanishad is expounded to remove any kind of doubts in the minds of devotees of both Vishnu and Shiva that their Lord is being demeaned in anyway whatsoever when they learn that either of them has been treated as being the Supreme Being in the scriptures, an unfortunate situation that would lead to un-intentioned and unnecessary tensions and doubts in the mind of spiritual aspirants. This Upanishad brings to rest any disparity and differences on this count and removes any idea of dichotomy and an illusion of duality that appears to be artificially and un-intentionally created between Shiva and Vishnu. Refer also to Rudra Hridaya Upanishad in this context

Thus, this Upanishad espouses the cause of uniformity and universality of Divinity and the principle of Absolute Truth of creation, though this Truth and Divinity may be known by different names under different circumstances.

The body of the Jiva is regarded as the temple of Shiva where the Lord resides as the pure conscious Atma. [Verse no. 10.] Therefore the body should be kept clean as one keeps the temple clean, and it is inside one's own self that the ultimate Truth should be searched and worshipped. The various steps of keeping this metaphoric temple clean and sanctified have been outlined, emphasizing the need to make spiritual worship more practically oriented.

1. [This proclamation comes from the person who has become self-realised and Brahm-realised after having understood the esoteric meaning and the fundamental essence of the word Shiva as enunciated and expounded in earlier Upanishad—the Dakshina-Mukhi. So, he makes this statement as a gesture of thanksgiving to his Lord.]

‘Oh Lord Mahadev (Shiva, the great God)! Even a tiny fraction of your divine grace upon me has made me fortunate and privileged so much so that I am blessed with great virtues and eclectic qualities that has empowered me to remain steady and unfaltering in my present exalted stature and my high state of being without the fear of getting demoted or become fallen. Your divine grace has enabled me to become an excellent fount and a vibrant and exuberant point-source that exudes the nectar of eclectic knowledge and divine wisdom known as Amrit, and to become an embodiment of Shiva himself. What more can I ask for; what more can I want?’ [That is, by the Lord's immense grace and benevolent blessings, the spiritual aspirant has become self-realised in as much as he has understood that his ‘true self’ is nothing but the eternal Shiva Principle personified as his Atma or pure consciousness. Being an embodiment of Shiva, he is deemed to have beautiful virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, dispassion, detachment, enlightenment, wisdom and erudition—because these are some of the magnificent eclectic qualities of Lord Shiva. Once having attained this exalted stature, there is nothing that a wise aspirant would wish to have.] (1).

2. When the spiritual aspirant has risen to a higher state of realisation when he forgets about his gross body and gross existence (i.e. when he stops treating his gross body as his ‘self’ or as his true identity), and instead treats his inner subtle self, his inner sublime being as his true and self-illuminated ‘self’ (i.e. when he begins to treat his pure, radiant and self-illuminated consciousness called the Atma as his ‘real self’ instead of the external body in which this Atma dwells), he is deemed to have reached that privileged, enlightened and wise state of existence when he can see the same radiant illumination (of the pure conscious Atma) in others as he sees it inside his own self. [That is, a self-realised and enlightened aspirant is deemed to have understood the principle of non-duality in its essence, and when he applies it in practice he finds that all the creatures with the gross body that he observes in this world around him have the same self-illuminated and radiant Atma in them that also resides in his own body. He does not see the gross body but has acquired the divine and mystical powers to peep behind the external façade and see the reality. It is like the modern x-ray machine that peeps behind the artificial

man-made clothes and even the natural covering of the body in the form of the skin to see the bone structure of our bodies.]

When he observes this phenomenon of the self-illuminated Atma present everywhere, his notion of his own independent individuality ends (because he sees no distinction between himself and the rest of the living creation; he stops seeing himself as a special entity which is separate and distinguishable from the rest of the creation). Instead of distinguishing between any two individuals, i.e. instead of having the notion of 'I' and 'you', he begins to see the same Hari (Lord Vishnu; the supreme Brahman; the pure conscious Atma that is universal and uniform) everywhere. [This is the height of his spiritual elevation when he begins to apply the eclectic principles of 'non-duality' in practice and in every sphere of life. All his ego and self pride has ended; he does not anymore treat himself as someone more wise and great than his fellow brethren. He becomes an epitome of humility and piety.] (2).

[Note—Exposition of the magnificent glories and divine virtues of the Atma has been a constant theme in all the Upanishads. Some of them are the following—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 81-110; Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-43, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 7-8. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda's Adhyatma Upanishad; Subalo-panishad, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); Paingalo-panishad, canto 4, verse no.18; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahmin 1. (c) Rig Veda's Atma-poojo-panishad. (d) Atharva Veda's Atmo-panishad.]

3. 'What better can it be that now I have realised that my true identity is established in the truthful Atma (instead of the body, as I had believed till now). That is why I feel myself as having no birth, and as being immortal and eternal (because these are the divine and magnificent qualities of the Atma).

Aside of this Atma (which has a truthful existence, which is sublime and subtle, and which is immutable and imperishable), the rest of the world appears to be like an illusionary dream; it is gross and perishable (3).

4. He who is the witness and observer of the entire creation—both the gross and inane on the one hand, and the subtle and sublime on the other—is the supreme Lord who is Achutya (i.e. who is steady and unfaltering, is eternal, imperishable, unchanging, unwavering, uniform and universal) and a divine embodiment of Gyan (truthful and eclectic knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment). This Lord is indeed known as Mahadev (Lord Shiva, the great God) and Mahahari (Lord Vishnu, the great sustainer, the great nourisher and the great protector of this creation) (4).

[Note—This verse unequivocally establishes a uniformity and non-duality between Shiva and Vishnu. Refer also to verse nos. 8-9.]

5. He is the primary source of all 'Jyotis' (lights). [Here the word 'Jyoti', which literally means 'light', refers to the something that illuminates the entire world and removes its darkness. Therefore, it stands for life-giving consciousness and dynamic energy on the one hand, and wisdom, erudition, sagacity and knowledge that sustains and furthers the development of this creation on the other hand. Besides this, this symbolic light emanating from the lamp of knowledge and wisdom removes the darkness created by

ignorance, thereby eliminating all the phantoms symbolising delusions that exist in such darkness.]

He is the Parmeshwar, the supreme Ishwar and the great Lord. He is the supreme transcendental Brahm. I (as my pure self, the Atma which is pure consciousness) am also that Lord—there is no doubt about it (5).

[Note—This verse establishes a unity between the Atma of the individual creature and the supreme Atma of creation known as Brahm. See also the following verses.]

6. The Jiva (the living being who has a gross body in which its Atma, the pure consciousness, resides as its ‘true self’ that forms its truthful identity) is indeed Shiva (the auspicious and truthful Lord, the supreme Brahm personified, the Supreme Being), and Shiva is also indeed Jiva. Indeed, the Jiva is undiluted and wholesome Shiva personified. [That is, they are one and the same; they are non-dual entities; they are synonymous with each other; there is no difference between them; they are interchangeable.]

They (Jiva and Shiva) bear the same relationship with each other as the grain of rice which has two names. It is called ‘Vrihi’ when the husk is not removed from the grain, and ‘Chaawal’ when the husk is separated from the grain. [The same grain of rice has two names, but they do not refer to different cereals or two distinct types of food grains; both the names apply to the same food grain called ‘rice’. Similarly, the Jiva and Shiva are essentially the same. In this example, the Shiva is the rice grain, while the Jiva is the husk. The entity that has real worth is the grain of rice and not the husk; it is the rice that is eaten and not its husk. The husk is merely a covering that has to be discarded to reveal the grain of rice hidden inside it. Likewise, the body of the creature forms a covering around its true self which is the Shiva hidden inside in the form of the Jiva’s pure consciousness known as the Atma. The gross body is of no worth if there were no Atma inside it even as the husk without rice inside is worthless. The husk is also like the layer of ignorance that surrounds the essential element of worth, i.e. the grain of rice.] (6).

[Note—Refer verse nos. 7, 9 also.]

7. In this way, that pure consciousness and divine entity becomes a Jiva when it gets tied in fetters or covered in a veil (of ignorance and delusions, thereby forgetting its pristine pure existence and divine heritage which has a magnificent sublime and subtle form).

The same divine entity becomes Sadaa Shiva (the auspicious and holy Truth that is eternal, unchanging, imperishable and constant) when all the shackling affects of its past deeds are done away with. In other words, when the creature is tied in fetters, it is called a Jiva, while the same creatures freed from its fetters is called Sadaa Shiva¹ (7).

[Note--¹That is, when the creature is able to understand that this world as well his gross body that lives and interacts with this world are not the real things because both are always changing and both are ultimately perishable, he would disassociate himself from getting involved with them. Who is this ‘himself’? Is it the body or something else? Herein comes into play divine wisdom and true knowledge of the reality. The wise and self-realised creature would understand that his ‘true self’ is his Atma and not the body, that it is the gross body that does all the deeds and not the subtle and sublime Atma, and the deeds are done by the physical body in a physical world. When the world itself is regarded as illusionary and delusory, the very question of doing physical deeds becomes debatable because one cannot do physical things in an imaginable and illusionary world just like one cannot find physical water and physically drink it in the imaginary mirage

seen in a desert. So the very foundation of doing deeds itself becomes shaky and untenable.

Besides this point, the creature's true identity is the Atma which resides inside the body, but the deeds are not actually done by it; they are done by the body. This body lives in the world. As is well established in the Upanishads, the world is like a mirage created by the mind, and anything that exists in a mirage and acts in it is also a mirage. Hence, the body is also a mirage because it exists in the world and acts in it. When this knowledge is acquired by the wise and self-realised spiritual aspirant, he becomes freed from the encumbrances caused by the deeds because the body is not his 'true self', but it is the Atma that is. This Atma is pure and truthful; it is not the mirage like the body. It is eternal and imperishable unlike the body and the world. Hence, it is like the Sadaa Shiva principle.

Refer to note of verse no. 13 below and to Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15 of Krishna Yajur Veda which unequivocally affirms that Mukti or final liberation and deliverance for the soul is available when the creature understands that his Atma and the supreme Brahm are one non-dual entity, and that the body is not his 'true self'. In fact, the entire verse, from no. 93/1 right up to 93/15 explains how the Atma appears to be tainted by the faults of the world.

Amongst the Upanishads that deal with the concept of the Atma being affected by the deeds done by the body when the former erroneously thinks that they are being done by it are the following—The *Adhyatma Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes the concept of doing deeds and its effect on the spiritual liberation or bondage of the creature in fine detail in its verse nos. 49-60. The 'Karma Chakra' or the giant wheel of deeds and their consequences has been described in the *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6, verse no. 3. The three Paths followed by a creature according to the deeds done by him are referred to in *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, 4/7. The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, verse no. 48 describes how one can become free from the fetters created by 'deeds'. The *Niralambo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 11-12 describes the concept of Karma. The *Sarwasaar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 6 describes the concept of how and why the creature becomes the doer of deeds

These concepts and the fact that a creature's destiny depends upon the deeds done by him have been elaborately described elsewhere also in (i) Rig Veda's Kaushitaki Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1; (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 3/1/3, 3/2/11-12, 3/9/28, 4/3/12, 33, 36, 5/10-5/11, 6/1/1-6, 6/2/2, 14-16, etc.; *Adhyatma Upanishad*, verse nos. 57-58, 66; (iii) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 5, Section 3-10; Canto 7, Section 21; (iv) Krishna Yajur Veda's Taittiriyo-pahishad, Valli 2, Anuvak 6; Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 20, and the whole of Canto 1, Valli 2 right up to Canto 2, Valli 3; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 7.

What happens to ignorant people after death is explained in Brihad Aranyak 4/4/1. The *Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse nos. 23-26 defines what constitutes of true 'Karma Yoga'. The *Mandal Brahmin Upanishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, 2/4/2-3 describes the philosophy of Deeds.]

8. Lord Shiva is an image or a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and similarly Lord Vishnu is an image or a manifestation of Lord Shiva. There is no distinction, disparity or duality between them. [In other words, there is no difference between them. Both are the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm personified. The only apparent difference is because of the two functions that Brahm carries out in these forms—viz. as

Vishnu he sustains and protects the creation, and as Shiva he brings it to its end. The divine entity that does all this is neither Vishnu nor Shiva, but Brahm. The two names are only indicative of the two duties the same authority performs.]

Lord Vishnu resides in the heart of Lord Shiva, and Lord Shiva resides in the heart of Lord Vishnu¹ (8).

[Note--¹In other words, though Vishnu seems to be engrossed and pre-occupied in the job of taking care of this vast kingdom of creation and totally absorbed in its affairs, looking as if he is a worldly being who rarely finds time to do self introspection and who is engulfed in all sorts of worldly cunning and deceit, internally he is as dispassionate and detached from all this drama as Lord Shiva is. Therefore internally Vishnu is an image of Shiva, i.e. he is as truthful, pure, uncorrupt, wise, self-realised, enlightened, renunciate, dispassionate, detached, non-involved, ever contemplative and meditative as Shiva. Though externally Vishnu remains worried about the welfare of his subjects put under his care, internally he is as care free, neutral and detached from them as Shiva.

In the same vein, though Shiva is said to be the lord of death, bringing to an end what is so arduously created by Brahma the creator and so painstakingly sustained and protected by Vishnu, internally he is very merciful, kind, benevolent and graceful like Lord Vishnu himself because the latter is the eternal protector and sustainer of creation. This is borne by the fact that Shiva utters the divine Mantra called the 'Tarak Mantra' which can give eternal liberation and deliverance to the soul of a dying man in his ears. Had Shiva only been vindictive, vengeful, merciless, unrelenting, cursing and wrathful in nature, epitomizing anger and cussedness, deriving sadistic pleasure in death, destruction and mayhem, he wouldn't have ever thought of the emancipation and salvation of the soul of the creature by either uttering the Tarak Mantra in his ears at the time of his death or preaching the profoundest principles and tenets of metaphysics to enlighten one about his true self and his oneness with the supreme Brahm as evidently he has done in his form of Dakshina-Mukhi Shiva. Besides this, Shiva is always in a state of meditation and contemplation; he is an epitome of bliss and tranquility—characters quite the opposite of the Lord known to preside over anger, wrathfulness and short temper which causes havoc, death and destruction. Refer also verse no. 4 in this context.]

9. Just like Lord Vishnu is a personified form of Shiva, Lord Shiva is too a personified form of Vishnu. When I (i.e. the wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant who has become self-realised) do not perceive any difference between them, I too become a personified form of auspiciousness and divinity represented by either of them¹.

Indeed, there is no duality and difference between Shiva and Keshav (Vishnu)² (9).

[Note—¹At the time of creation, the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all encompassing gross body of the supreme Brahm, revealed himself in the form of the living being, forming the latter's gross body at the microcosmic level of creation. The Shiva principle is treated as the cosmic Consciousness operating inside the Viraat Purush at the macro level of creation, and as its counterpart the Atma in the individual living being at the micro level of creation. Thus, both are essentially and basically the same. Refer verse nos. 5-7 in this context. Refer also to Adhyatma Upanishad, verse no. 20 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition.

²Refer verse nos. 4,8 in this context.]

10. Those who are expert in the fundamental tenets of metaphysics assert that the body is the temple or shrine where the only enlightened and divine Supreme Being to be

worshipped by the creature resides in the form of Shiva (i.e. in the form of the pure consciousness that is enlightened, divine, truthful, eternal, auspicious, uncorrupt and untainted).

To do true worship one has to have a clear vision of the deity to be worshipped, and this untainted and undistorted view of the holy deity residing inside one's own self is possible only by abandoning the tainting and distorting effects caused by ignorance and delusions of all sorts. [These are caused by worldly faults, improprieties and imperfections that act like a darkening veil on the immaculate self, preventing the spiritual aspirant from having a divine vision of the holy entity residing in his bosom as his Atma.] (10).

[Note—The Pran Agnihotra Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda also emphasizes the importance of treating the body as the holy site where the supreme Brahm resides. In fact, it advocates the performance of the fire sacrifice internally by visualizing the body as the sacrificial pit in which the vital winds called the Prans are offered as offering to honour the supreme Brahm residing inside it.

The Yogshikha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse no. 168, and Canto 5, verse nos. 2-5 also reiterates this point that the body is a holy temple where Lord Shiva resides. Refer also to Adhyatma Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, verse no. 1.]

11. True Gyan, i.e. to have real knowledge, erudition, sagacity and wisdom, is to have a uniformly view the presence of the non-dual Divinity known as Brahm in all the living beings in creation (as the pure consciousness known as the Atma which happens to be the true 'self' of all the creatures).

Similarly, real Dhyān, i.e. to be truly contemplative and meditative, is to have no attraction towards and be non-involved in all the objects of the senses in this material world.

True Snaan, i.e. to take a bath for the purpose of cleaning oneself before worship, is to abandon all the impure and inauspicious thoughts that occur in the mind and taint the heart.

Likewise, real Shauch, i.e. real cleaning, is to keep the sense organs under constant restraint (or, exercising self-restraint) (11).

[Note—These stanzas highlight the real essence of worship. Far from mechanical rituals and perfunctory formalities, it stresses the real form of worship. It would be noted that if one follows the instructions laid down here, he would not only be doing an ideal form of worship, he would also be improving himself in a practical way and in a holistic manner. His approach towards life would change, and instead of remaining restless and unhappy, he would find steady peace and happiness.

An enlightened man would not need to do costly and time consuming external forms of ritualistic worship or read extensive scriptural tomes because the 'real thing' has become known to him. He would not have to search the entire stack of hay when he has found the gold he had set out to find!

If one individual can improve himself, the whole society would be affected just like the case when one bad character can ruin the whole society. The beginning has to be made, and then the laws of Nature would take care of the rest.]

12. After having drunk the elixir of Brahm realisation (i.e. after having experienced the spiritual bliss and ecstasy that comes with being acquainted with the great truths as

enunciated by the Upanishads about Brahm), one need only eat sufficient enough to sustain the body in a healthy manner¹.

He should abandon the idea of duality and remain submerged in meditating upon one supreme Consciousness. He should live a secluded life in a lonely place. [In other words, he should remain focused in his spiritual pursuit and not get distracted by the disturbances created by this world, or get entangled in the snare of worldly attractions.]

Only a person who remains steady in this path and follows these instructions diligently is the one who finds final liberation and deliverance for his self—i.e. he finds ‘Mukti’ (12).

[Note--¹That is, he should eat proper food to maintain a health body because the body is like a temple in which he can worship the deity. But at the same time he should not start to worship the body by pampering it with tasty and too rich forms of food by becoming an indulgent eater because his object of worship is not the body which is merely a temple but the deity residing in it in the form of the Atma. This Atma is not hungry for worldly tastes and delicacies.]

13. I bow and pay my obeisance to the Supreme Being who resides in the supreme abode called the ‘Param Dham’¹. Let me be blessed by his grace. Let me have a long and fruitful life.

Oh Lord Narasingh² who is a personification of the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, nourisher and protector, and Shiva the concluder! By your divine grace, I am able to recognise that supreme transcendental Brahm in my own Atma; I have begin to see that Brahm as a manifestation in my own pure consciousness known as the Atma, my pure self. That Brahm is marked by such glorious virtues as ‘Achintya’ (one who is beyond comprehension and thoughts, one who is beyond the reach of the mind and intellect), ‘Avyakta’ (one who is un-manifest, unseen and without any attributes), ‘Anant’ (one who has no end and limits; one who is infinite and eternal), ‘Avinaashi’ (one who does not perish and die; one who cannot be demoted, demolished and ruined), and is ‘Vedatmak’ (an embodiment of the Vedas; a manifestation of the divine knowledge contained in the Vedas) (13).

[Note--¹Here there is a play on words. The ‘supreme abode’ is the subtle and sublime heart where the conscious Atma resides. This Atma has already been said to be Shiva personified, this Shiva is the ultimate and absolute Truth of existence or creation personified, and the ultimate Truth is the ‘Supreme Being’ known as Brahm, or cosmic Consciousness. The supreme abode is also the heaven where the three chief and primary manifestations of Brahm have their abode in the form of the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder. In other words, the man himself is the one who has created this myriad world, it is he who is responsible for its existence, and it is he who can conclude it. This observation has tremendous metaphysical significance. This world is false and full of miseries but the man voluntarily remains neck deep submerged in it and whole-heartedly engrossed in it inspite of this knowledge that it is he who is to blame for all his sufferings having their genesis in this world. It is his own mind that has created this world for him because he was enticed by the magnificent vision of its alluring but imaginary charms and wished to enjoy them. Once he tastes the world, his sense organs get hooked to it and then they push-propel him to remain going ahead in this direction, i.e. to remain engrossed and submerged in the ocean-like world in the hope of discovering newer methods of enjoying it. In this, he even suffers a lot but sweeps these sufferings under the carpet and bargains them for momentary happiness that is got by sensual gratifications. But to his dismay he finds that

all his pleasures and enjoyments are short-lived, his sufferings are like insurmountable huge waves of the ocean which throw him off the boat so often that he has become weary and tired of trying to recover from his ordeal, that all his attempts to obtain respite from his worldly sufferings are momentary, and that he would never find eternal rest and peace unless he seeks the true remedy for all his ailments. He is like a fish splashing and floundering around nervously and in utter dismay once it finds itself trapped in the net by being enticed by the bait and greedy enough to bite it.

Then the trapped man begins his search for ways of finding freedom and deliverance from the quagmire in which he has allowed himself to land in. He seeks his salvation and emancipation by studying the scriptures and consulting wise teachers. Once becoming aware of it, he pursues his spiritual goal, and if he is careful, prudent, steadfast and wise he would ultimately reach it. Having known what the 'truth and reality' are, he would shun falsehood and delusions like the plague because he would have realised by now that the crux of all his sufferings and problems lies in his ignorance and misconceptions. He realises that the cause of all his torments was the ignorance of the truth and the existence of the deluding world which he now endeavours to get rid of. He finds that real and meaningful peace and happiness can come only when he detaches and disassociates himself from getting emotionally and mentally involved in this artificial world. In other words, he himself begins to dismantle the world that he had so arduously and painstakingly constructed earlier, or begins the process of concluding his involvement with this world. The world would come to an end for him; it would cease to exist for him. He is freed from the fetters that shackle him to this world and everything associated with it, including his body and the cycle of birth and death, and the theory of deed and their consequences.

The Jiva or a living being, a man for example, is himself responsible for all his problems and he should not blame others for it. Refer also to note of verse no. 7 above.

That is, the man is the creator, sustainer and concluder of the world himself. Or, he is indeed that Brahm who can bring about all this to fruition. He is Brahm personified. Almost all the Upanishads endorse and espouse this basic axiomatic maxim of metaphysics and spiritualism. Some of such Upanishads are Brahm Vidya, Brahm, Tejobindu, Atma Prabodho, Atma, Atma Bodh, Ishawasya, Shukar Rahasya, Mahopanishad etc.

²It is to be noted in this verse that *Narsingh* has been regarded as an incarnation of the three Gods of the Trinity, and then the general tenor and language of the verse clearly indicates that it is the supreme transcendental Brahm that is being referred to here. In other words, Lord Narsingh is a manifestation of Brahm itself; he is the revealed from of the dynamic and forceful powers of Nature to get rid of evil and negativity in this creation.

Narsingh is the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped Vishnu. This 'half lion and half man' form of the Lord is a visible image that has a cosmic counterpart as the 'half man and half female' manifestation of the Lord that is known as 'Ardha-Narishwar'. This cosmic form of Brahm as Ardha-Narishwar has two components—the right half is depicted in iconography as being a male representing Shiva, the great God, the other half is female representing his divine Shakti known as Parvati or Uma. This Shakti represents the dynamic energy of Shiva. When this applies to Brahm, the male aspect refers to the Supreme Being himself while the female aspect applies to Maya which is the dynamic power that Brahm employed to initiate this magical creation. This depiction is basically envisioned to drive home the point that Brahm and Shakti are inseparable in the context of the creation of the world. This elementary method of reproduction is known as 'asexual reproduction' and is depicted by many asexual

plants and animals even today. For instance, the one-celled amoeba reproduces itself by cleavage. On the other hand, if we were to regard Brahm in its purest form as the cosmic Consciousness, then Brahm would not need the other half of the Maya, and would only be one and universal entity which has no definite and describable form and shape, it has no attributes and qualities. This form of the sublime and most subtle Brahm is known as either the Hiranyagarbha or the Viraat Purush depending upon the level of subtlety and grossness which is assigned to it, the former being more subtle than the latter.

The 'lion' part is a metaphor for the grand qualities of unmatched stupendous strength, physical prowess and complete sway over the entire domain of the forest and its inhabitant wild animals that the lion possesses and which are symbolic of the inherent stupendous might of the supreme Brahm as the unquestioned Lord of this forest-like world inhabited by myriad variations of creatures just like a dense forest infested by wild animals. Similarly, the 'man' part symbolises the fact that Brahm is the most highly placed Lord much like a human being who represents the highest level in the ladder of evolution.

In other words, even as the lion is the unquestioned lord of the wilds and the man of all the living beings, the supreme transcendental Brahm is the unquestioned Lord of all that exists in all its variations, whether in its primary form represented by the wild animals of the jungle or in its more evolved and developed form represented by man.

Lord Narsingh is the fourth incarnation of the Supreme Being who had taken various forms to ward off and overcome evil forces in creation when they become ascendant and overcame the good and the righteous. The Lord did this to maintain order in the creation which is like his offspring.

So when one of his great devotees known as Prahalad was being extremely tormented by his own father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, the Lord appeared as Narsingh—or as a half lion and half man form—from the pillar to which he was tied by the demon to prove to him the omnipresence and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. Narsingh is a personification of the grand virtues of power, energy, valour and strength, and hence is worshipped by warriors and rulers in general. The Mantra of this Lord is believed to be very powerful and effective against enemies and opponents.

Iconographically, there are many forms of Narsingh. Some of them are as follows—as seated (Aasin), as standing (Sthaanak), as boon-giver (Vardaayak), as ferocious and angry (Ugra), as striding (Yaanak), in the company of Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth and the divine consort of Vishnu (Laxmi-Narsingh), as seated in Yoga or doing meditation like Shiva (Yoga-Narsingh), as a resident of a mountain (Girija), etc.

His images depict him in either two hand form or in four hand form. In the latter case, the two back hands hold a conch and discus like the case of Vishnu. The two front hands are shown as killing the demon Hiranyakashipu by forcing the latter on his lap and tearing his abdomen and yanking his entrails out by his sharp nails.

An entire Upanishad called the *Narsingh Tapini Upanishad*, which is the 7th Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, is dedicated to him. An entire Puran called 'Narsingh Puran' is likewise dedicated to this Godhead. This Puran glorifies Narsingh as an incarnation of Vishnu, and is synonymous with Narayan, the Supreme Being called Brahm. Lord Vishnu himself is a macrocosmic, all-inclusive and invisible form of the supreme transcendental Brahm, and therefore Narsingh is a de-facto visible form of Brahm.

The *Shukar Rahasya Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 27, while describing the process of invoking one of the components 'Asi' ('is) of the Maha Vakya (the great saying of the Vedas) 'Tattwamasi' ('that essence is you) says that the Shakti (dynamic energy) of this individual component 'Asi' is Narsingh.

14. Those who are spiritually enlightened and wisened about the truth of Brahm always remain contemplative and meditate upon the divine abode of Lord Vishnu. As such, they are virtually having a constant view of this supreme abode where the Lord lives; they are constantly keeping sight of this divine vision before their eyes. They keep the sight of Lord Vishnu's divine abode constantly before their eyes¹ (14).

[Note--¹In other words, they keep their attention focused on their spiritual well being and their target of attaining liberation and deliverance from the deluding world of numerous spiritual hurdles and pitfalls inspite of going about their routine worldly affairs. They remain focused not on the world but on the primary target of life which is to obtain emancipation and salvation in this life as a human being itself because such chances are rare to come by.

The phrase 'to keep the heavenly abode of Vishnu always in sight' is a figure of speech to emphasise the fact that they remain steady and steadfast in their spiritual progress and never falter from it; they think and see only that which is auspicious and holy. The result is that their eyes reflect the image of Vishnu like the sun getting reflected from the mirror; their eyes shine with a divine radiance and the glorious light of self-realisation. This light of enlightenment and realisation removes all darkness of ignorance and delusions that surround them, and it lights up the path for them much like the lighted lamp that shows the path to travelers during the night. That is also why the eyes are said to be the symbolic abode of the Sun God because the sun is the lamp of the cosmos and the eye is that of Brahm residing inside the body as his 'temple' or holy abode. This fact is endorsed in verse no. 10.

In other words, a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant remains steady and vigilant in his path; he does not falter or flounder in the wake of delusions and myriad forms it takes in the world where he lives.

The fact that Yoga helps in having a divine vision of Lord Vishnu has been affirmed elsewhere also, such as in Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad of the Skukla Yajur Veda, Canto 2, verse no. 100.]

15. The wise and enlightened ones who have accessed the truthful knowledge of Brahm obtain access to the supreme abode of Lord Vishnu, enter it and finally get lost in it. That is, once they have entered the state of Brahm-realisation and tasted its nectar-like blissfulness and eternal happiness, they prefer to remain in that state and never attempt to get out of it and show their faces in this world again. They adopt this heavenly state of existence as their permanent abode and prefer to remain incognito in it lest anyone recognise them and pull them back into the slippery slush and filth of this material world. They virtually voluntarily allow themselves to get lost in that divine state of existence of blessedness and holiness that is a metaphor for the heaven where Vishnu lives.

This is the complete instruction for obtaining Nirvan (emancipation and salvation) of the soul as prescribed by the holy Vedas. This is their tenet and axiomatic principle. This is what is called the Upanishad pertaining to this Nirvan. Amen! (15).

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3.5 Krishna Yajur Veda tradition's Rudra Upanishad—

This is a very small Upanishad having only three verses in the form of paragraphs. It is dedicated to Lord Shiva and is closely related to Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad which is also dedicated to this deity. It says that those who remain sincerely involved in following the essential tenets of the divine Principal of creation known as Shiva, i.e. the eclectic principles of the Shiva Tattva, are truly exalted and wise ones; they are worthy to be called Brahmins. All the elements of creation, e.g. earth, water, fire, air and sky are regarded as symbols of Shiva and represent the sacred ash smeared by him on his body. In other words, since this world is formulated out of these five primary elements of creation, it follows that the whole world is a revelation of Shiva.

Shiva is synonymous with Pran; he is revealed in the form of the vital spark of life called 'Pran' that transforms a lifeless creature into a lively living being.

He is the wisest and most enlightened teacher and preacher for the entire world and had even taught Brahma, the creator of this visible world, about the basic truth of creation and its hidden realities. In fact, it was Brahma who had first worshipped Shiva in this capacity of a wise teacher and a personification of knowledge and truth as clearly mentioned in Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad.

Shiva is revealed Brahm inasmuch as he has five forms called Panch Brahm representing the five primal manifestations of Brahm. Basically this entire creation is an expansion of this Panch Brahm, and therefore of Shiva.

By adoring the grand eclectic virtues that Shiva stands for and represents, the follower too becomes one like him; he too attains the highest level of wisdom and enlightenment which paves the path for his liberation and deliverance.

1. The Brahmin who is known as 'Vishwa Maye' (i.e. an exalted and wise person of high birth who has a broad view of the world and sees the entire world as a manifestation of the Supreme Being) approaches Lord Shiva (for worship, knowledge, patronage and blessing).

That Brahmin experiences (in his own inner self, his Atma) the presence of the Lord, and honours him by the five-letter Mantra (which is 'Namō Shivaye'—meaning 'I bow before Lord Shiva').

That Brahmin is regarded as the best and most exalted who spends his time in worshipping and contemplating upon Lord Shiva. [That is, he remains submerged in meditation on the pure conscious Truth where Shiva is said to reside.]

If any Brahmin is devoid of devotion for and faith in Shiva, he would be regarded as a Chandala or Up-chandala, the lowest category of human beings.

In spite of knowing all the four Vedas, a Brahmin is called true and worthy only if he has turned inwards to worship Shiva in his own Atma; or who has turned away from all external forms of worship of Shiva, and worships the ultimate Truth in his own bosom, i.e. in his pure conscious self known as the Atma.

Even a lowly Chandala (an outcaste) who is soaked in devotion for Shiva is better than a Brahmin who is devoid of it.

A Brahmin who wears the mark of the Tripund (the horizontal lines on the forehead of all Shiva worshippers) is regarded as the best category of Brahmin.

This (i.e. the virtues enumerated in this Upanishad) is the hallmark of his being a Brahmin; this is deemed absolutely essential and necessary for him to indicate that he adores and follows the best principles.

Only those who have sincere devotion for and faith in Shiva are eligible to be called a Brahmin.

Even a Chandala who worships the Shiva Lingam (the idol representing Shiva; Shiva's symbol) is deemed to be better than a Brahmin (who has no devotion for and who does not worship the Shiva principle).

The ash received from the hands of a Chandala who has worshipped Shiva is more holy and respected than the ash of a sacrificial fire pit.

The holy ash used by devotees of Shiva is of three colours—copper (dark) coloured, white coloured and grey coloured like the colour of smoke.

For renunciate hermits and ascetics, the ash should be sanctified or pure. [That is, it ought to come directly from the sacrificial fire pit.]

For householders, the ash should be clean. [That is, it should be fine powdery in texture and should not contain coarse particles of burnt wood or charcoal etc. that would make it appear unclean.]

The renunciates and ascetics who do Tapa (severe penances and austerities) should accept any form of ash (i.e. even the coarser forms unlike the fine powdery forms acceptable by householders) as long as that sample of ash has been blessed with Shiva's divine powers and his essential principle has been established in it. They should readily wear (smear) this ash with due respect as a symbol of Shiva's presence.

This ash which is acceptable by ascetics is also acceptable to the Gods (1).

2. OM salutations! The five elements such as the fire, the wind or air, the earth, the water and the sky—all of them are personified in this ash worn by Shiva. One should wear it (i.e. smear it on his body) with this belief and faith.

Elsewhere in the scriptures it has been said that the Ishwar, the supreme Lord of creation, has his eyes in all the directions, his mouth in all directions, his hands and legs in all the directions. [In other words, all forms of individual creatures are manifestations of Ishwar; he lives in every corner of creation, and all the eyes, mouths, hands and legs that are seen all around us every moment are actually the organs of that Ishwar.]

He is the only Lord or creator who creates the earth and sky by his own hands (like the potter moulding various pots and pans of clay by his own hands).

He is worthy of being adored, revered and honoured by all.

All living beings bow before him. That is why he is recognised by the element known as Pran or life. In other words, since only living beings can recognise him, since living beings would pay their obeisance to only that entity which has 'life' in it and which is of any value for them, for they obviously wouldn't worship a dead and useless entity, it follows that Shiva principle and Pran principle are synonymous with each other.

Therefore, Shiva principle is 'Pran Linga'—Shiva has manifested himself in this world in the form of 'Pran' which is the vital spark of life present in a living being; he is Pran personified and vice versa. Shiva is recognised as the 'living' aspect of creation, the fundamental but most secret and esoteric power that keeps the world 'alive' in the form

of the Pran—the vital winds which provide the most essential factors of life to the otherwise lifeless body of the creature in this living world. So, the latter is the ‘Pran Linga’ of Shiva—i.e. it is the gross visible manifestation of the life infusing capabilities of Shiva in the form of the vital winds called Pran.

The iconographic form of Pran Linga Shiva has a lock of matted hairs on his head and ash smeared on his body.

Shiva and Pran are synonymous with each other. The world of mobile living creatures is a manifestation of Shiva, and vice versa.

The entire living creation is a manifestation of Shiva, and Shiva embodies in his cosmic self this entire creation. They are synonymous with each other.

It is not possible for the entire living creation, which is called the Pran Linga world (so-called because it is sustained by the vital winds called Pran), to obtain mystical divine powers and purest forms of wisdom and spiritual attainment. Amongst the entire living creation, only those who are spiritually upwardly mobile are regarded as better and more competent for acquiring such exalted position. [The entire living world includes plants and lower level of animal kingdom such as insects, worms, birds, reptiles wild animals etc. It is obvious that they cannot read scriptures and do auspicious deeds to improve themselves spiritually. Plants and animals cannot worship Shiva and understand even the basics of metaphysics and spiritualism. Low rung creatures of this world are contented in feeding themselves and deriving sense gratifications. They do not think of their future. This is the exclusive privilege of the human race. So humans are deemed to be competent to obtain the Shiva Tattva. But even amongst them, all do not get this privilege because the majority of them are no less than animals in their instincts, temperaments and behaviour. It is only a few who really qualify for the exalted stature of being called wise and enlightened.]

Even amongst the humans, those who do Tapa (observe severe forms of self restraint, do penances and austerities, and generally suffer hardships as a means to cleanse themselves) are regarded as exalted. But the privileged, exalted and holy stature occupied by such people is no match when compared with those Chandals who are great devotees of Shiva. Such Chandals are deemed to be more highly placed in the spiritual hierarchy than even ascetics who spend their time in doing rigorous Tapa but do not know the real intent and purpose nor the proper path to be followed in the observance of this religious exercise because they do it just for the sake of doing it and are more often than not misguided. Therefore, they cannot access the nectar called the Shiva Tattva, the ‘Shiva principle’.

All living beings with a gross body are visible proofs of the astounding and magnificent powers of life revealed in the form of their ‘Pran’, i.e. each living creature with a gross body is Pran personified. They are ‘Pran Linga’, or Pran with a gross body. But amongst them those Chandals who devotedly worship Shiva are considered as the best form of Pran Lingas. That is, such Chandals are regarded as the most exalted humans, even surpassing the Brahmins and ascetics.

Anyone who understands this basic principle is indeed Shiva personified.

Rudra (a form of Shiva) is the only Pran Linga in this world, and there is no one else except him who has manifested himself as the living world consisting of living creatures. [This is the holistic non-dual Advaitya philosophy espoused and expounded by all the Upanishads in one voice, and in a universal and uniform manner.] (2).

3. OM salutations! The Atma (pure consciousness) is an embodiment of the (supreme transcendental) Brahm as well as of (the auspicious and truthful, the holy and divine) Shiva.

The Atma is a personification of the moral preceptor who is wise and enlightened, i.e. the Guru, as well as Shiva (the enlightened, wise, most erudite and all-knowing Lord who is the teacher and preacher for the whole world in his form as Dakshin Mukhi Shiva).

It is the moral duty of a true Guru to lend moral and advisory support to the entire world with his high level of wisdom, knowledge and erudition. He should prevent the world from sinking under the weight of sins and perversions by providing it with correct and practical guidance; it is tantamount to his bearing the world and preventing it from breaking apart or sinking into chaos. This is achieved by them by harnessing the stupendous dynamic powers that are encapsulated in the various divine Mantras by chanting them or repeating them systematically so that the powerful energy of the Mantra can actually be utilized constructively for the welfare of the entire world. This world is dependent upon such Mantras. [That is, the world needs knowledge and wise council to survive. Without knowledge and information, life on earth would be very difficult and hostile. It is the duty of Brahmins to act as wise, selfless, neutral and sincere teachers and advisors—or Gurus—to guide the people and help them fulfill their desires in a righteous manner.]

The supreme Lord's glories and magnificence, his majestic powers and authority, his astounding abilities and prowess are being expressed through these Mantras. [This is because the whole world is a manifestation of Brahm, the supreme Lord, and since the Mantras are nothing but formulas to solve various problems that occur in a person's life, they are an expression of the Lord's multidimensional ability to sustain and protect this creation.]

That Lord is the universal Guru of all of us. [Here, the 'Lord' being referred to is Shiva in his form as the moral preceptor and teacher of the entire world in his form as Dakshin Mukhi Shiva described in the Upanishad named after him.]

The truthful spiritual knowledge and divine wisdom which is imparted by Shiva in his capacity as the creation's Guru is like the food for the creature that sustains his life in this creation. This knowledge is as sublime and supreme as the supreme Brahm. [This is because without Brahm the world would not have come into being in the beginning. This has a parallel in food without which no life can be ever sustained. Food is needed to sustain physical life in creation while spiritual knowledge is needed to sustain one's spiritual life and help him in his progress to obtain his true goal in life. Therefore, food and knowledge bear close resemblance and kinship with the creature just like the supreme Brahm whose physical features are represented by this gross visible world and whose subtle features are represented by such glorious virtues as knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment etc. While the physical features form the gross body of the creation, the subtle features are represented by the faculty of mind and intellect. The Brahm himself is represented by the Atma residing inside the body consisting of both the gross form as well as the subtle form.]

Brahm is so esoteric, mysterious and enigmatic that he can be known only by a person's own experience and not by being told or taught by others.

Lord Shiva is the universal Guru, and this form of Shiva is a subtle and sublime form. [That is, the Shiva principle is present in all wise teachers and preachers. Extended further, it implies that self-realisation or self teaching or self awareness is also a form of Shiva because no knowledge is ever possible without Shiva being an integral part of the process.]

Shiva is an image or personification of both the aspects of the supreme transcendental Brahm—i.e. as a manifested God he has a well defined body with known attributes and character traits, and as the un-manifested sublime principle he reveals himself as the pure consciousness or the self-illuminate Atma of all living beings. He is therefore the ‘life’ of all; he is the ‘Pran’ of all.

Being an authority of such glorious magnificence and divine virtues, he is called ‘Maheshwar’, the great God. [This ‘great god’ is none other but Brahm himself. In other words, Shiva and Brahm are one and the same.]

Therefore, Shiva is the great Guru as well. [This is because the word Guru means one who removes darkness, and the Atma, being self-illuminated and a treasury of wisdom and enlightenment, would naturally remove the darkness of ignorance that had been engulfing the creature once he comes to realise the presence of the Shiva principle in his own Atma present inside his own bosom by meditating upon the Shiva Tattva, or the principle tenets of metaphysics and spiritualism that talk about the ultimate and non-dual Truth about the pure divinity known as the ‘self’ in this creation.]

Where there is a Guru there is Shiva present. [That is, a teacher is a personification of Shiva because he gives knowledge and wisdom that removes the darkness of ignorance for his disciple. Hence, a sincere and worthy Guru should be given the same degree of respect and honour that one would give Shiva.]

The great God called Maheshwar is indeed a personified form of a Guru and Shiva. [The form that combines the excellent virtues of a wise, learned and knowledgeable teacher or Guru, and the one who is truthful, auspicious, divine, holy, enlightened and dispassionate or Shiva is indeed rare to find even amongst the Gods. That is why one personifies the eclectic and glorious virtues of a Guru and Shiva is indeed eligible to be called a great God or Maheshwar.]

Applying the principle of ‘Bhramar-Keet’¹, a devotee who remains perpetually engrossed in the deep thoughts and devoted worship of Shiva not only as his chosen deity but also as his Guru, i.e. one who worships Lord Shiva as his Guru besides worshipping him as the personification of the Supreme Being, becomes, in due course of time, indistinguishable from Shiva so much so that he need not then offer separate worship to the Lord anymore. In other words, he keeps on worshipping Shiva involuntarily each moment of his conscious life so that he need not do so consciously and separately.

[¹The *Bhramar* is the wasp who catches hold of smaller insects, the *Keet*, and keeps them trapped in its comb. The incarcerated insect is subjected to constant close humming sound made by the wasp that hovers constantly around it at very close quarters. The resultant psychological effect is so profound that by and by the insect also assumes the nature of the wasp and transforms into one; the insect is brain-washed to such an extent that it thinks and imagines of nothing else but the wasp and begins to imagine itself also as a wasp. This example is cited here to explain the phenomenon how the devotees who constantly think of Shiva and keeps on repeating his Mantras becomes one like Shiva. This is because constant practice and thoughts of Shiva would have had a

profound effect on his psyche, and his sub-conscious mind would think of nothing else but Shiva not only as some revered God but also as the one who imparts divine wisdom and eclectic knowledge of the fundamental Truth of creation.]

By doing 'Abhishek' of Shiva Lingam (i.e. by anointing the Shiva Lingam with milk or water as a token of honouring and paying obeisance to Lord Shiva through his symbol), all the sins and other forms of evil deeds done by the devotee are made null and void. That is, he does not have to suffer from their horrendous consequences.

By doing 'Abhishek' of the Guru (i.e. by anointing the teacher with milk or water as a token of honouring him and paying one's obeisance to him) and by sipping the water used to wash the feet of Maheshwar (Lord Shiva), one can wash off the sins of many generations.

To have love and devotion for them (i.e. by doing Abhishek of the Lord and washing his feet, by doing Abhishek of the Guru, and by worshipping them both) is tantamount to having love and devotion for Shiva. [In other words, the Guru here may be Lord Shiva himself or some other person or God, but the worshipper should think, while offering his obeisance to the Guru, that he is worshipping Shiva in the form of the Guru.]

The great satisfaction and contentedness derived by the worshipper from this form of worship is tantamount to Shiva himself deriving this satisfaction and contentedness. [This is an obvious inference from the fact that the Atma or soul or pure self of the worshipper is the actual entity which enjoys the mental satisfaction and derives pleasures from doing something noble, holy and auspicious, and this Atma is a personification of Brahm who is none other but Shiva himself. Therefore, the one who is actually enjoying the rewards of good deeds is Shiva himself.]

To live in its proximity is the most auspicious and holy deed. [When one lives close by something noble, holy and auspicious, his whole being undergoes a radical transformation, because one becomes like the company one keeps. In other words, the worshipper becomes a changed man in due course of time. He becomes as holy, noble and auspicious as Shiva.]

Elimination or destruction of all delusions and ignorance is like Shiva annihilating or concluding this material, deluding and falsehood-ridden world. [The symbolism of Shiva as the concluder of the world is very cleverly brought out here.]

A person who has inculcated this divine and eclectic knowledge is always submerged in a perpetual state of bliss and ecstasy. [This is why Lord Shiva has been depicted as always being in a state of utmost bliss and ecstasy. Once all delusions and ignorance are removed, there will be no cause for any confusions and consternations to create any kind restlessness and unhappiness. Once the light of enlightenment shines through, the darkness of ignorance and delusions will automatically vanish.]

That is why one should take the refuge and shelter of Lord Shiva. That is also why one should take the refuge and shelter of a Guru (because it is the latter who would direct the seeker towards the Truth in the form of Shiva).

This is the best and the most holy thing, or the most auspicious and righteous path to be followed (3).

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3.6 Atharva Veda tradition's Sharav Upanishad—

This Upanishad was revealed as a discourse between sage Pippalaad and the creator Brahma. It describes the greatness of Lord Shiva in his form known as Rudra.

The word 'Sharav' has two connotations. According to one, it means one who is the killer or slayer, and the other meaning is one who is the liberator and a provider of salvation to the creature.

As per the first meaning, Sharav is that form of the Supreme Being which instils fear in the heart of evil and pervert creatures, and kills or eliminates their evil tendencies. This is endorsed by verse nos. 6-7 and explained by citing the instance of Nrisingh being killed by Sharav because the former had gone out of control and was terrorising the creatures. Other instances are in verse nos. 9, 11, 13, 14, 15.

The second meaning of Sharav as the supreme Lord who provides liberation and deliverance to the creature is expressly endorsed in verse no. 31, and indirectly by implication in verse nos. 10, 11, 17, 18, 30.

That Sharav and Shiva are the same Supreme Being known as Brahm is endorsed by verse nos. 3-5, 19-24, 26, 31-34.

The word also refers to 'the Lord who shines in the heart of his devotees'. According to legend, Lord Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, the half man and half lion incarnation, to kill the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting his own son Prahalad because the child was a devout follower of Vishnu. After having killed the demon, Nrisingh started roaming in the forests, striking terror in the hearts of all the creatures. It was then that Shiva, the universal Lord who has been honoured with the epithet of 'Mahadev' as he is the greatest and supreme God, had assumed the form of Sharav, the killer, and liberated Vishnu from the body of Nrisingh (refer verse no. 6). Thus liberated, Vishnu had thanked him a lot (verse no. 19) and went to his divine abode called Vaikunth. So this ferocious form of Shiva known as Sharav was also called 'Rudra', the angry and ferocious form of the Lord. One can imagine the fight that might have raged between Nrisingh and Rudra, and obviously Rudra must have been more ferocious than Nrisingh in order to subdue the latter.

Presently, when sage Pippalaad asked Brahma, the creator, who was the senior God amongst the Trinity consisting of Brahma himself along with Vishnu and Shiva, he replied that it is Rudra, or Shiva. Hence, this Upanishad is dedicated to Lord Rudra in his manifestation as Sharav, and is therefore named 'Sharav Upanishad'.

The Gods have praised Sharav and established the latter's superiority. This Upanishad describes the immense rewards of being enlightened about the esoteric secrets of the real and truthful form of Lord Rudra, along with the special norms to be observed while studying this eclectic philosophy.

This Upanishad also highlights the oneness between Shiva as Rudra and Vishnu. In this context, one should also refer to other Upanishads that espouse the same non-dual philosophy—viz. Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of Krishn Yajur Veda, and the Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 6, verse nos. 8-9 of the Atharva Veda.

In this context it should be noted that there are Suktas or hymns in the praise of both Lord Shiva (verse nos. 9-15, 26) and Lord Vishnu (verse nos. 25, 27-28). Then there is a specific hymn establishing the fact that it is the same Supreme Being who has personified himself as the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva (verse

nos. 4). The greatness of this Supreme Being is highlighted in numerous verses, e.g. nos. 5, 21-23, 29-32.

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1. Once upon a time, sage Pippalaad¹ asked Brahma the creator—‘Oh Lord! Please be kind to enlighten me about who amongst the three Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Rudra² or Shiva the concluder, is senior and worthy of honour and worship?’ (1).

[Note—¹A brief introduction to sage Pippalaad is given as a note of verse no. 1, Canto 1 of Prashna Upanishad.

²Rudra is the angry form of Lord Shiva. The word means ‘the terrible one; the angry and ruthless one; one who roars and thunders; one who makes the enemy weep; one who destroys this transmigratory world of birth and death; one who destroys ignorance and delusions; one who eliminates evil and perversions.’

Rudra is a Vedic deity and has been eulogized in three full Suktas (hymns) dedicated to him. These are Rig Veda’s 1/114/1-11; 2/33/1-15, and Yajur Veda’s 16/1-66. Besides these Suktas, Rudra is honoured as a deity at a number of places in the Vedas—viz. Rig Veda—1/43/1-4, 5/42/11, 7/46/1-4, 7/59/12; Atharva Veda—5/6/3-4, 6/55/2-3, 7/92/1, 11/2; and Yajur Veda—11/54.

Rudra is regarded as the father of Marut, the Wind God (Rig Veda, 2/33/1). Rudra assumes many forms—usually it is eleven forms (Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/4/9/7), but sometimes they are also said to be thirty-three in number (Taittiriya Sanhita, 1/4/11/1). Rudra is regarded as having a close relationship with Agni, the Fire God (Shatpath Brahman, 5/2/4/13). The Padma Puran, Swargakhanda, Chapter 8 mentions only eight Rudras. These eight, eleven or thirty-three forms of Rudra might mean as many aspects of Shiva.

However, in terms of the Upanishads, the eleven Rudras stand for the ten vital winds called Prans + one Mana or mind. The ten Prans are five chief Prans such as Pran (breath), Apaana, Samaana, Udaana and Vyana, and five subsidiary Prans such as Nag, Kurma, Krikara, Devdutta and Dhananjaya. [Refer—Trishikhi Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 77-87 of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition; Dhyana Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 55^{1/2}-57 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

Rudra is said to have created such mythological figures as Bhuts (ghosts), Pretas (disembodied spirits), Pishacha (goblins), Khusmaandas (malignant imps).

In iconography, he has been depicted as wearing long tresses coiled on the head, has strong powerful arms, has a body decorated variously with serpents or priceless ornaments, and holds a strong and invincible bow and arrow as well as a thunderbolt. When necessary, he becomes ferocious and charges at his enemies on a chariot or on foot, while at the other times he is full of mercy and compassion. He is closely associated with forests and mountains, and is also the patron deity of herbs and medicinal plants. Hence, he is the killer of diseases and a great healer. Here, ‘healing’ would mean spiritual healing rather than physical ailments afflicting a creature.

He destroys sins and evil tendencies in the world, and grants the boon of liberation and happiness.

According to the epic Mahabharata, Anushasanaparva, Chapter 14, it is Shiva in the form of Rudra who destroys this creation at the end of one cycle of creation.

Now, who would liberate such primarily innocent souls trapped by Maya, and who would provide protection to other innocent creatures who are being subjected to torments by this single deluded and evil-possessed soul? Naturally it is their supreme Father who is

very merciful and who is greatly pained at the predicament in which his off springs, the creatures, find themselves in. So this Father intervenes not only to free the trapped soul in the evil body, but also to provide succour and solace to other creatures who are being tormented by this single individual.

Thus, the Parameshwar assumed the form of Shrav or Rudra to liberate Vishnu from the evil body of Nrisingh.

The 11 Rudras—The eleven Rudras are the various manifestations of Lord Shiva. They are the following:--(i) Mannu, (ii) Manu, (iii) Mahinas, (iv) Mahaan, (v) Shiva, (vi) Ritdwaj, (vii) Ugrareta, (viii) Bhav, (ix) Kaal, (x) Vamdeo, and (xi) Dhritvrat. The eleven Rudras appear in Rig Veda 1/43/1, and Taiteriy Brahman 3/4/9/7. They are regarded as the father of the Wind God or the Maruts (Rig Veda, 2/33/1). The word Rudra means one who is angry, terrible and wrathful. Amongst the Rudras, Lord Shiva is regarded as the most senior and enlightened.

The eleven Rudras according to Vishnu Puran (1/1/15) are the following—Har, Bahuroop, Trayambak, Aparaaajeet, Shambhu, Vrishaakapi, Kapardi, Raivat, Mrigvyadh, Sharva, and Kapaali.

The Lord is considered to be the most enlightened of the Trinity Gods, and is therefore called 'Maheshwar'. He always remains in a meditative posture, always contemplating and meditating on the supreme Soul and the Truth. But still he shows anger and mercilessness, because one of his tasks is to punish the evil and sinful ones by ruthlessly slaying them in order to protect the good and righteous souls in the creation. Further, when his meditation and peace is disturbed he also becomes angry. He remains aloof and disinterested in the world, because he is very wise and enlightened, and he stays in the form of an ascetic. Ordinary people think that he is proud, arrogant and haughty because he does not give a damn to worldly formalities and niceties of behaviour. Shiva's failure to conform to set norms of proper and sane conduct makes him look most odd God.

The word 'Rudra' is literally used as a metaphor for anger, wrath, vehemence and cussedness. But this a very misleading title for Shiva because there are a number of great Upanishads which describe Rudra as none but the Supreme Being known as the transcendental Brahm from whom the entire creation has emerged, who sustains it and in whom the creation would finally collapse. It is this Brahm in the form of Rudra who is treated at the supreme Lord God of creation, and hence is called Maheshwar. The Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition and Atharvashir Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition are exclusively dedicated to this theme. The Dakshin Murti Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes the esoteric significance of the Shiva Tattva or the essential knowledge of Shiva who is the greatest Guru or moral preceptor and teacher of the creatures.

The Atharvashir Upanishad of Atharva Veda is especially relevant here because it explains the various epithets used to describe the virtues and glories of the supreme transcendental Brahm by Lord Rudra himself, and upon close reading it would be very clear that Rudra is describing Brahm when he describes himself.

The Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, in its Brahman 1, verse no. 3 says that the Rudras, along with the Vasus and Adityas etc., were born out of the third step of the divine Anushtup Chanda in which the Mantra of Lord Nrisingh was revealed to the creator Brahma when he did severe Tapa in order to initiate the process of creation.

Another form of Rudra is known as Kalagni-Rudra. It literally means Lord Shiva, the concluder, in his most ferocious form which is like the 'fire of dooms-day'. Shiva is the greatest ascetic, a great renunciate, most auspicious and regarded as an enlightened God. So his invocation helps the spiritual seeker to burn all his worldly delusions and taints arising out of ignorance and attachments to falsehoods. This paves the path for his

ultimate liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. Lord Shiva is the designated Authority that controls death and destruction, not only of the gross physical world and its visible objects but also metaphorically of all the evil tendencies, all the blemishes and faults that are characteristic of this deluding world and which usually cover the soul of the creature like a layer of thick scum floating on the surface of the otherwise crystal-clear waters of the mountain lake.

The Rudraksha beads (seeds of the tree *eleocarpus ganitrus*) with five faces or surfaces used in rosaries and necklaces are also called Kalagni-rudra beads because these are very much liked by Lord Shiva. The great spiritual importance and metaphysical significance of the Rudraksha beads have been explained in the Rudraksha Jabal Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition, the Kalagni Rudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, and the Brihajjabal Upanishad, Brahman 7, verse no. 8 of the Atharva Veda tradition.

The Brihajjabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition is essentially revealed by Lord Kalagnirudra when he was approached by sage Bhususnd who wished to know about the immense spiritual value and metaphysical significance of the sacred ash of the fire sacrifice, called the 'Bhasma', and the three lines marked on the body from its paste, called the 'Tripundra'—refer Brahman 1-6, Brihajjabal Upanishad.]

2. The great grandfather Brahm replied—'Oh Pippalaad! Listen carefully to what I would narrate.' (2).

3. One is most fortunate and lucky if he can know or be acquainted with the greatest God known as 'Parameshwar'—literally the supreme Ishwar or Lord God. This is possible only as an auspicious reward of immense good and righteous deeds done by the aspirant.

Even the chief Gods such as Vishnu who is the chief in the Trinity of Gods, and Indra who is the chief amongst all the rest of the Gods, are unable to know about this Parmeshwar from whose body even I (the creator Brahma) am born (3).

[Note—The 'Parameshwar' referred to here is the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic form of Brahm, the Supreme Being. Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness which is the root cause of creation. The subtle macrocosmic body of Brahm is known as Hiranyagarbha, and the gross body of Brahm at the cosmic level of creation is the Viraat Purush. As the name itself suggests, the 'Viraat' is the vast, colossus, all-including invisible form of Brahm, and it is from this Viraat that the rest of the units of creation, including Brahma the creator himself, came into being. Since Brahma represents the primary form of Brahm or the initial form that Brahm took in order to initiate the process of creation, the former is also called Hiranyagarbha. Therefore, Brahma is depicted as being born atop a divine lotus springing out of the navel of the Viraat Purush. Since the world is a manifestation of the Viraat Purush, the Purans have called this Viraat as Vishnu—the 'Vishwa or the world in this symbolic form'.

4. It is the same Lord who first bears (conceives and brings forth or reveals) Brahma the creator. It is he who is worthy of acceptance as the Supreme Being.

It is he who is the Lord of creation, the supreme Father, the most exalted, and the inspirer of the Vedas.

Indeed, he is the God of all the gods, and the Father of all (4).

5. It is this Parmeshwar who is the Father of me, Brahma, as well as of Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation. It is he who concludes the entire world at the time of the dooms-day deluge in the form of Rudra or Shiva¹.

We bow and pay our obeisance to that great Lord God. It is he alone who is the regulator of this creation, the most exalted and honourable, and the Supreme One (5).

[Note—¹According to the epic Mahabharata, Anushasanparva, it is Shiva in the form of Rudra who destroys this creation at the end of one cycle of creation.

The Narad-parivrajak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, verse no. 1 describes these three aspects of Brahm as Srishti Brahm, Viraat Brahm and Samhaara Brahm.]

6. It is this same great Lord who assumed the ferocious form of Sharav (the great killer or slayer) to overcome and kill Nrisingh¹ (6).

[Note—¹According to legend, Lord Vishnu had incarnated as Nrisingh, the half man and half lion incarnation, to kill the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting his own son Prahalad because the child was a devout follower of Vishnu. After having killed the demon, Nrisingh started roaming in the forests, striking terror in the hearts of all the creatures. It was then that Shiva, the universal Lord who has been honoured with the epithet of 'Mahadev' as he is the greatest and supreme God, had assumed the form of Sharav, the killer, and liberated Vishnu from the body of Nrisingh. Thus liberated, Vishnu had thanked him a lot and went to his divine abode called Vaikunth. So this ferocious form of Shiva known as Sharav was also called 'Rudra', the angry and ferocious form of the Lord. One can imagine the fight that might have raged between Nrisingh and Rudra, and obviously Rudra must have been more ferocious than Nrisingh in order to subdue the latter.

There is another connotation of the word 'Sharav'. The word literally means the killer or slayer. In other words, Sharav is that form of the Supreme Being which instils fear in the heart of evil and pervert creatures, and kills or eliminates their evil tendencies. The word also refers to 'the Lord who shines in the heart of his devotees' as their Atma or pure consciousness.

The creature or the embodied soul is called 'Shar' or the form of the ethereal spirit that has assumed a gross physical body having a head. One who cuts off the head is known as 'Sharav'. The head is a metaphor for pride and ego and their accompanying traits of hypocrisy, haughtiness and arrogance. It is in the head that all evil planning is done, and it is the head that inspires the creature to indulge in all sorts of vices and inauspicious deeds. When this happens, the great God, the Parameshwar, makes it sure that the soul of such a creature is liberated from the sinful body in which it has been trapped by killing the gross body and liberating the soul.

So, while on the surface it appears to be a physical fight between two powerful creatures, one being the Shar and the other being the Sharav, here referring to Nrisingh and Rudra respectively, it is actually a system evolved by Nature whereby evil and perversions are kept under check. It is a system instituted by the Supreme Being himself to regulate and maintain balance, order and law in his creation. Though Nrisingh was Lord Vishnu himself in that form, the latter forgot who he actually was once the Lord had assumed a physical form. This is the effect of Maya—the overwhelming power of delusions that automatically comes with having a gross body like that of ordinary creatures. This situation also highlights the reason why all the creatures are under the overpowering control of Maya—if Maya can delude Vishnu to forget about who he is and wander in the forests as some cruel creature in his form as Nrisingh then it is little wonder that ordinary creatures are held under the overpowering sway of Maya.

Now, who would liberate such primarily innocent souls trapped by Maya, and who would provide protection to other innocent creatures who are being subjected to torments by this single deluded and evil-possessed soul? Naturally it is their supreme Father who is very merciful and who is greatly pained at the predicament in which his off springs, the creatures, find themselves in. So this Father intervenes not only to free the trapped soul in the evil body, but also to provide succour and solace to other creatures who are being tormented by this single individual.

Thus, the Parameshwar assumed the form of Sharav or Rudra to liberate Vishnu from the evil body of Nrisingh.]

7. When the supreme Lord of the Gods (i.e. Sharav or Rudra) caught hold of Hari's (i.e. Lord Vishnu's in his form as Nrisingh) leg and dragged him away forcibly, all the rest of the Gods were extremely alarmed and they pleaded with the former to have mercy on the latter. They prayed—'Oh the supreme Purush (Lord)! Have mercy on Vishnu. Do not slay him. Glory be bestowed upon you.' (7).

8. At that time, the most mighty, strong and powerful Lord attired in an animal hide (i.e. the almighty Lord known as Rudra or Sharav disguised as a wild beast) ripped apart the gross body of Vishnu (in his form of Nrisingh) and mercifully liberated the latter's soul from it.

Lord Rudra was then honoured by the epithet of 'Virbhadrā'—literally meaning the Lord who is strong, courageous, brave, bold, valorous and valiant (8).

[Note—The Nrisingh was the 'gross body' of Vishnu which the Lord had assumed just like the form of Sharav, the wild beast, that Lord Shiva had done in order to free Vishnu's from the form of Nrisingh.

The philosophy of the Upanishads repeatedly stresses in an unequivocal term that the gross body of any creature is not his 'true self', and that the latter is his Atma, his pure consciousness that is also called his 'soul', his 'spirit'. The gross body is just that—it is merely 'gross' and nothing else. The 'true self' is subtle and sublime, and it resides inside this gross body just like a person who lives in a building made of bricks and mortar. The Atma is virtually trapped within the limits of the gross body; the body acts as a virtual prison for the Atma. Hence, any situation which provides freedom for the Atma from the gross body would be giving liberation and deliverance to it.

Therefore, when Lord Rudra tore apart the external gross body of Nrisingh he actually liberated the Atma known as Vishnu from the prison of the gross body known as Nrisingh. Vishnu is not even remotely like the external features of Nrisingh which was most unconventional in being half man and half lion. Vishnu had assumed this odd form for a specific purpose just like Brahm, the Supreme Being, assuming so many varied forms to carry out specific objectives in this creation. The duty of Lord Shiva in his angry form of Rudra is to bring about the end of any unit of creation when its purpose is served. Hence, when the purpose of Vishnu's incarnation as Nrisingh was served, it fell upon Rudra to carry out his divine mandate to end this unconventional form of Vishnu. After all, to conclude anything is not Vishnu's duty, it is Shiva's role.

However, not to demean this form of Vishnu as Nrisingh and to stress that it is as holy as the Supreme Being himself, an entire Upanishad called the 'Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad' is dedicated to this Lord. A reading of this Upanishad would show that all forms of Brahm are essentially the same, and one must not be either deluded or confused by the external features. It must be noted that the Upanishads are unequivocal in their declaration of the philosophy of Advaitya—i.e. the doctrine of non-duality which stresses that that all forms of 'Truth' are quintessentially one and the same.]

9. Indeed, it is Lord Rudra who can bestow all the Siddhis (mystical powers and accomplishments), and it is he who is the Lord worshipped by all.

We bow and pay our obeisance to the Lord who had also cut off the fifth head of Brahma, the creator¹ (9).

[Note—¹This incident is narrated in Devi Puran, Canto 42, verse nos. 35-54. A full English version of Lord Ram's story called the Ramayan as it appears in this Devi Puran, Canto 36 to Canto 48, has been published separately by this humble author, and this incidence is narrated in it in detail.

Briefly, the story goes that once Brahma got enamoured with his own daughter named Sandhya. At this evil thought of his, Lord Shiva had chopped off his fifth head. So we come to the conclusion here that Shiva, in his form as Sharav, is relentless in pursuit of upholding what is righteous and noble, and eliminating what is not. He has not spared either Brahma or Vishnu when they deviated from the path of Dharma and had broken the laws of Nature. That is why Shiva is honoured as 'Mahadeva', the 'Great God'.]

10. We bow reverentially and pay our obeisance to the great Lord known as Rudra who can burn to ashes the entire world by the fierce spurt of fire emanating from the third eye located in his forehead¹, and is so gracious that he re-creates it once again after punishing it (for its sins and misdeeds by reducing it to ashes), and then offers it his protection (10).

[Note—¹Lord Shiva has three eyes, two conventional eyes and one hidden eye located in the center of the forehead between the two eyebrows and the top of the root of the nose. Hence, Lord Shiva is also known as Lord *Trayambak* or Lord *Trinetrum*.

The significance of the *three eyes* have been elucidated in a number of Upanishads, viz. (i) Atharva Veda = Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 6; and Canto 2, paragraph no. 21; Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 10; Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4; (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 93.

This *third eye* is not some physical eye but a subtle eye symbolizing the Lord's high level of enlightenment and wisdom. This burning of the evil world by opening of the third eye of Shiva is a metaphoric way of saying that a creature can use his eyes of wisdom, erudition, knowledge and enlightenment to overcome all delusions and misconceptions about the truth and reality, along with all mischief as well as negativity and evil tendencies in this world. The 'burning' is elimination of such negativity and perversions.

According to Yoga philosophy, an ascetic focuses his Pran or vital winds at this spot in the forehead where he experiences enlightenment and the nectar of bliss dripping from it. By the way, Shiva is regarded as the patron God of all ascetics precisely for this reason.

There is a legendary story associated with this third eye. Once, Parvati, his divine consort, had closed his two eyes, and as a result the world was plunged in darkness. To save the world from this all-encompassing darkness, Shiva willed a third eye between the two eyebrows. This eye spouted fire with its accompanying heat and light. So, the celestial sun can be regarded as a symbol of this third eye.

Once when Shiva was in deep meditative trance and was teased by Kamdeo, the God of passions, at the behest of Gods who had wanted Shiva to marry and produce a male child who would kill the demons, he felt so annoyed by Kamdeo's temerity and impertinence that he opened this third eye to burn him down.

The three eyes of Shiva or Rudra symbolize the Sun, the Moon and the Fire which are regarded as the eternal sources of light in this creation. The Sun and the Fire provide the heat and energy so essential for sustenance of life besides being an eternal source of

light, while the Moon is regarded as the pitcher of Amrit, the elixir of bliss and the soothing nectar that neutralizes the scorching effects of the Sun and the Fire. Refer verse no. 14 also. The third eye, as has been noted above, stands for the excellent level of wisdom, erudition, knowledge, enlightenment and omniscience that the Lord possesses.

The *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph no. 21, says that the three eyes of Lord Shiva are the sun, the moon and the fire.

From the metaphysical perspective, his two eyes are the conventional eyes, and his third symbolizes his deep insight and great wisdom and enlightenment. Shiva personifies the fire element which also has a symbolic significance. The fire is known to burn all impurities present in gold when it is put into it, thereby purifying the metal. Similarly, fire is used in blast furnaces to extract iron from its ore. Fire has the inherent ability to reduce to ashes all filth and garbage, which is a metaphoric way of saying that a person who has worshipped this element in the form of Shiva is supposed to have burnt all his faults, blemishes and shortcomings that taint his character and soul, thereby purifying his inner self. The ash is indicative of total renunciation and detachment from the world of materialism, because it is indicative of a renunciate way of life and symbolically stands for burning of everything into the fire pit. That is why Lord Shiva has been called the patron God of ascetics, hermits and Sanyasis who worship the fire element only.

Besides these points, Shiva is the God assigned the task of concluding the world which necessitates his being closely associated with the 'fire element' in the sense that he must be as unrelenting, merciless, powerful and ferocious as the latter in order to conclude this creation in spite of all the odds. He must reduce everything to ashes just like the fire does. And it is from this ash that the new creation would emerge in due course. Herein lie the magic of creation and its chief Lord, Brahm, the Supreme Being—the fact that a new creation rises from ashes!

The *Yogattva Upanishad*, verse no. 93, of the Krishna Yajur Veda says that the third eye symbolizes the Fire element.

Lord Shiva as Lord *Triyambak* appears in the following Upanishads—

(i) Atharva Veda's *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph no. 6 which says that his Mantra should be said when the worshipper applies the sacred Bhasma (ash of the fire sacrifice) on his body from the toe to the head.

(ii) The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4 is entirely devoted to Lord Trayambak. It describes the meaning of this word and the Mantras dedicated to Lord Trayambak in great detail.]

11. We bow reverentially and pay our obeisance to the great Lord known as Rudra who had killed Kaal (death personified) by trouncing him under his left leg, and who had drunk the scorching poison called Halaahal without a second thought¹ (in order to protect the creation from being eroded and scalded by its scorching effects) (11).

[Note—¹This refers to the incident when the Gods and the Demons had churned the celestial ocean in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternal life. This scalding and horrible poison known as 'Halaahal' was produced as a result of this churning, and Shiva had volunteered to drink it to protect the creation from its burning effects. So he picked it up in his cupped palms and drank it. But the Lord realised that if he allowed this fierce poison to enter his abdomen it would burn the creation because the entire creation is deemed to be lodged in the Lord's abdomen as he is the Viraat Purush himself. So he kept this poison in his throat, thereby giving it an eternal bluish tinge. In this form, and to commemorate this great event, Lord Shiva was honoured by a new epithet—'Neel-Kantha', the Lord with a purple or blue throat. Refer verse no. 16.

According to some accounts, when Shiva drank this fierce poison, Parvati, his consort, was so frightened at the consequences that she squeezed his throat, and thus the poison remained there forever.]

12. We bow reverentially and pay our obeisance to the great Lord known as Rudra who was so pleased by Lord Vishnu when the latter had placed his eyes at his left foot as a token offering that he gave Vishnu the powerful weapon called the 'Chakra', or weapon in the form of a circular serrated discus that Vishnu holds (12).

13. We bow reverentially and pay our obeisance to the great Lord known as Rudra who is so valiant, invincible, strong and powerful that he had defeated all the Gods in the Yagya (fire sacrifice) of Daksha¹. In this war, he had even ensnared Vishnu in a snare made of celestial serpents (13).

[Note—¹The story goes that Daksha was his father-in-law, but he did not approve of Shiva's life-style. So, once when he did a fire sacrifice, he did not invite Shiva and his own daughter Sati, the divine consort of Shiva, and neither did he offer any oblations to the Lord along with other Gods of the Trinity as is necessary during such ceremonies. Sati insisted on going to attend the ceremony inspite of Shiva's strong reservations, and there she was so peeved at the insult inflicted on her husband Lord Shiva that she died in the self-generated fire of Yoga. Then Shiva went with his army headed by himself as Virbhadrā. Refer verse no. 8. He ransacked the sacrifice and punished the Gods. When Vishnu tried to defend the sacrifice and intervene on behalf of the Gods, Shiva had him captured in the snare of snakes.

According to some accounts, Virbhadrā was created by Shiva by plucking a hair from his own head.]

14. We bow reverentially and pay our obeisance to the great Lord known as Rudra whose three eyes are the Sun, the Moon and the Fire (representing eternal sources of light, life, energy, warmth and heat).

He had playfully slayed the demon Tirpuraasur¹. [Hence, Shiva or Rudra is also called Tripurari.]

All the Gods are like animals in front of him. That is, all the Gods are under his overall command and depend upon him for their survival and protection. That is why the Lord is honoured by the epithet 'Pashupatinath' or the Lord of animals² (14).

[Note—¹Tarakaasur was the son of Vajraanga and his consort Varaangi. He had done severe Tapa (austerity and penance) as a result of which the creator Brahma had granted him several boons which had made him invincible. He was killed by Lord Subramanya, the son of Shiva and Parvati. He had three sons—Taaraaksha, Kamlaaksha and Vidyunmaali. They had also pleased Brahma and by his blessings built three great cities, collectively called 'Tripura'. These cities were made of gold, silver and iron. When they became a nuisance for the Gods, Shiva destroyed these three cities and the demons with one arrow. These three demon brothers are collectively called *Tripuraasur*. Therefore he got the name of Tripurari—one who destroyed the three enemy cities.

²This concept of how the Lord comes to be known as *Pashupati* has been explained in the Jabalu-panishad of Sam Veda tradition, verse nos. 11-18 which stresses that 'Isha' or Shiva is known as 'Pashupati', Lord of animals, because Shiva is the undisputed Lord of all the creatures, and those creatures who have lost wisdom and a sense of righteousness are no better than animals.

The term ‘animal’ is a general way of indicating all living beings who are serfs of their sense organs, who lack adequate wisdom and intellect to think for themselves what is Dharma (auspicious, righteous, noble and proper) and what is not, who are indulgent and have a preponderance of Tama Guna in them. Such creatures are overcome with Vasanas (passions and worldly yearnings) and unable to control their natural Vrittis (inclinations, habits, temperaments and tendencies) that are of lowly nature. They live a life wallowing in the illusive comforts and pleasures of the world, forgetting in the hallucination that all the charms of the world are illusive, deluding and entrapping for them and their souls. They have no time or inclinations for higher things of life and the soul. They think that this world is all there is to it, and that there is no better way to spend their precious life than to take a plunge in this world and its material objects. They have nothing to do with such eclectic subjects as Gyan, Atma, Mukti, self-realisation etc.

In order to control such creatures the Lord assumes the form of ‘Pashupati’ just like a householder has to become a ‘cattle-herder’ to take care of his livestock.]

15. We bow reverentially and pay our obeisance to the great Lord known as Rudra who is the supreme inspirer behind the various divine incarnations of Lord Vishnu* such as Matsya¹ (the legendary Fish), Kurma² (Tortoise), Varaaha³ (Boar), Nrisingh⁴ (half Man and half Lion), Vaaman⁵ (the dwarf mendicant form of Vishnu) etc.

The powerful Lord had even subjected Indra, the king of Gods, to become weary and tired. He had reduced to ashes the pride of Kamdeo-cupid, the patron God of love and passion⁶, and of Yam, the God of death⁷ (15).

[Note—*It is a very significant observation. It shows that there was some superior Authority who had directed Vishnu to reveal himself as the various incarnations listed in this verse. It is this superior Authority that is known as Brahm. This Brahm is the supreme transcendental Consciousness that resides in the heart of Vishnu to inspire the latter to do anything. If this is the picture at the cosmic level of creation then it is replicated at the level of the individual living being whose Atma is the same Brahm inspiring him to do anything.

¹*Matsya* or Fish incarnation of Vishnu—In this incarnation as a Fish or Matsya, which is the first of ten divine incarnations of Vishnu, the Lord is said to have saved Manu, the progenitor of mankind, and the Saptarishis (the seven mental sons of the creator Brahma) along with their wives during the dooms-day deluge. They were made to board a boat which was pulled by this Fish and saved from being drowned. They repopulated the world later on. It is a story identical to the Biblical story of the Noah’s Arc.

²*Kurma* or Tortoise incarnation of Vishnu—It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.

³*Varaaha* or Boar incarnation of Vishnu—It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad.

⁴*Nrisingh*—The story of this incarnation is narrated in note of verse no. 6 of the present Upanishad. Further, there is an Upanishad dedicated to Lord Nrisingh known as Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad. It belongs to the Atharva Veda tradition and is its 7th Upanishad.

⁵*Vaaman* or Dwarf incarnation of Vishnu—This is the fifth incarnation of Vishnu. When Bali, the grandson of Prahalad for whom Vishnu had incarnated as Nrsingh, conquered the entire world and deprived Indra, the king of Gods of his heavenly kingdom, Vishnu had took the dwarfish form of a Brahmin mendicant to retrieve the heaven for Indra when he was requested by Aditi, the mother of Gods, to do so. He approached Bali, who was famous for his charities, as a *Vaaman* or dwarf and begged him for ground sufficient enough to be covered by his three small steps. When the unsuspecting Bali agreed, *Vaaman* measured the entire earth with one step, the heaven with the second step and for the third step he measured Bali's own head or his crown. He put his third step on Bali's head and pushed the latter to the nether world. Hence, Vishnu is also called 'Trivikram'—one who conquered the three worlds in three steps. But the Lord is so kind and gracious that he not only bestowed to Bali the kingdom of the nether world but agreed to be his custodian there.

⁶The story of why *Kamdeo-cupid* was reduced to ashes is narrated in note of verse no. 10. Once when Shiva was in deep meditative trance and was teased by Kamdeo, the God of passions, at the behest of Gods who had wanted Shiva to marry and produce a male child who would kill the demons, he felt so annoyed by Kamdeo's impertinence that he opened this third eye to burn him down.

This is why the Lord is also known as 'Kamari'—the one who had trounced the haughtiness of Kamdeo.

⁷Shiva had trounced *Yam*, the God of death, to save his devotee Maarkandeya. Sage Maarkandey was the son of sage Maarkandu. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, the patron God of death, so much so that when death approached him personified as Kaal when the sage was yet quite young because destiny had it that he would die still when young, he clung to the Shiva Lingam (the image of Shiva) with the greatest of devotion, surrender and urgency that comes with one facing certain death. Lord Shiva appeared and prevented Yam, the God of death from tying him in his snare and taking him away. The Lord blessed him with a virtual eternal life, blessing him that he would live for another 14 Kalpas (1 Kalpa = 1 day of Brahma or roughly 4.32 billion human years). His magnum opus is the 'Maarkandey Puran'. He had also edited and abridged the Manusmriti, the code of life and conduct as laid by the first human named Manu to regulate society and act as a constitution and manual for ready reference for the forthcoming human race, into eight thousand verses, and passed it to sage Bhargava. His reference comes in the Mahabharat epic when he approaches the Pandavas and taught them the principles of Dharma (code of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and nobility). He was the one who had enlightened Yudisthira that Krishna was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu (Vanapurva, 189). In the same Mahabharat, he preaches the celestial sage Narad the laws of Dharma (Anushaasan-purva, 50-62).]

16. Thus, the Gods prayed to Lord Neelkanth Parmeshwar (literally, the supreme Ishwar or Lord God who has a bluish-tinged throat, a clear reference to Lord Shiva) in various ways to please the Lord and ask for forgiveness from him (16).

[Note—Refer verse no. 11 and its accompanying note.]

17. Pleased by the Gods' prayers, the Lord God destroyed all their torments that take three forms¹ as well as the sufferings associated with birth, death and old age² (17).

[Note—¹The three great torments are called *Traitaap*. They are the following— *Adhi-bhautik*—related to terrestrial creatures such as enemies, cruel kings and wild animals; *Adhi-daivik*—related to unfavourable Gods and malignant stars; *Adhi-daihiik*—related to the body such as diseases and horrors of old age etc.

²The three points of time when a man has to undergo the maximum amount of suffering is during his birth, during old age when he is infirm and ridden with various diseases, and at the time of death.

The implication of this verse is that the supreme Lord was so pleased with the Gods that he granted them immunity from these sufferings—they were made immortal and imperishable. Henceforth they did not have to take a birth or die or become old in the conventional sense.]

18. When Lord Shiva heard the Gods' pray and saw them showing great respect to him by offering their obeisance in various ways, he was very pleased. The primeval and eternal Lord of creation, Lord Shiva, blessed all of them with his mercy and grace, and gave them his protection (18).

19. He who is worthy of being offered worship, obeisance, honours and prayers, who is beyond the reach of the faculty of speech (i.e. words cannot describe his glories), and the dust of whose feet is eagerly sought even by Lord Vishnu (who is himself one of the great Gods of the Trinity)—that great Lord Maheshwar (Shiva) felt very honoured and pleased when Lord Vishnu bowed before him with devotion and showed him his respects. [Refer verse no. 8. When Rudra or Lord Shiva had freed Vishnu from the gross body of Nrisingh, Vishnu reverted to his primary form. Finding freedom from this gross body of a half man and half lion (Narsingh), Vishnu indeed felt very obliged, and therefore he offered his thanks to Shiva.] (19).

20. A spiritual aspirant who becomes realised and enlightened enough to be acquainted with the truth of the supreme transcendental Brahm who is an embodiment of eternal bliss, happiness, beatitude and felicity, Brahm who is so immensely great, indescribable, esoteric, mystical and transcendental that the mind and speech return defeated or empty-handed in their attempt to reach, understand and define him—indeed, such a Brahm-realised and enlightened aspirant has nothing to fear anymore. [This is because such a self-realised man would understand that his gross body is not his true identity, but the latter is the Atma that is his 'true self'. This Atma is pure consciousness that is a sublime and ethereal entity which is not subjected to the fears and limitations that the gross body has to face.] (20).

21. The eternal and supreme Consciousness lives ensconced secretly in the subtle heart of all living beings¹ in a form that is smaller than an atom but of such immense importance and significance that it surpasses the most important and the most significant entity that might exist anywhere in creation.

Only a few self-realised and highly enlightened spiritual aspirants who do selfless service and have become freed from the snare of all sorts of emotional and mental miseries, grief and sorrows pertaining to this mortal world are fortunate enough to be able to have a divine glimpse of this eclectic, subtle, sublime and divine entity in their own hearts (or are able to realise the presence of this Consciousness in their own bosom) as a reward of the grace and munificence of the Lord himself (i.e. by the grace of Brahm who is also the Consciousness referred to here) (21).

[Note—¹Refer (i) Shukla Yajur Veda's Subalo-panishad, Canto 8, verse no. 1. (ii) Atharva Veda's Prashna Upanishd, Canto 3, verse no. 6; Mundak Upanishad, Canto 2, section 2, verse no. 6-9; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 3.]

22. The supreme Lord who is meditated upon and remembered most reverentially by such highly acclaimed souls such as the sages/seers Vashistha¹, Vamdeo² and Shukdeo³ (the parrot sage), as well as by Viranchi (i.e. Brahma, the creator) himself, who is honoured by the offering of prayers by such honourable sages and seers as Sanatsujat and Sanatan (i.e. sages Sanatkumar and others called Sankaadi Rishis)⁴ amongst others—verily, that great Lord God known as Maheshwar (a reference to Lord Shiva) is the Lord who is the same primary and eternal Lord who was present even at the beginning of creation, and who predates all other Gods. [That is why Shiva is called 'Bhagwan Adi Dev'—the primordial Lord God who was present before the creation came into being.] (22).

[Note—¹Sage *Vashistha* is one of the well known ancient sages and mentioned even in the Rig Veda (refer Rig Veda, 7/33/14). He is regarded as the Manas-putra of the creator Brahma. In other words, he was the mental-born son of Brahma born as a result of his decision to have a son. As such, he is one of the great celestial sages known as Sapta Rishis—or the seven great sages. According to another version, he was born in a Kumbh or a pitcher as a son of the Varuna God (the Water God). Another great sage named Agastya was his twin brother.

He was the court priest or Rajguru of the Ikshavaku dynasty belonging to the Solar race who ruled over the kingdom of Ayodhya. It was in this solar race that Lord Ram, an incarnation of Vishnu around whom the epic Ramayan was written, was born. Vashistha is credited with one of the greatest treatises on Vedanta, called Yog Vashistha. It is also called Maha Ramayan.

Arundhati, also known as Akshamala and Urjaa, was the most erudite, sagacious and wise wife of sage Vashistha. She was the daughter of Prajapati Kardama and his wife Devahuti. Sage Atri's wife Anusuiya was her sister, and sage Kapil was her brother. Her famous son was sage Shakti. She was a preacher and a well known scholar of the scriptures in her own right, and was no less enlightened than her husband Vashistha.

His son was sage Shakti. Sage Parashar was his grandson, and sage Veda Vyas, who is the legendary classifier of the Vedas and the author of the Purans, was his great grandson.

The celebrated sage Kapil, who is said to be the proponent of the great school of Hindu philosophy known as Shankya Shastra, was the brother-in-law of sage Vashistha, being the brother of his wife Arundhati, and the only son of sage Kardama and his wife Devahuti. He taught even his mother spiritual wisdom in Bhagavata, and hence this part of this scripture is called 'Kapil Gita' in which the sage has expounded upon the philosophies of Sankhya Shastra, Ashtanga Yoga (the eight-fold path of Yoga) and Bhakti-yoga (the path of devotion for and submission to the Lord) (3/25-33).

There are a number of legends associated with Vashistha. One such tale narrates how his all-wish fulfilling cow named Nandini was attempted to be stolen by king Vishvarath, the son of Gaadhi. The attempt failed miserably. This king was so determined and in awe of Vashistha's mystical powers that had prevented him from acquiring this cow that he did severe Tapa (austerity and penance) to acquire similar powers. Thus, he became sage a great sage known as Vishwamitra.

²Sage *Vamdeo*—He is a well referred to sage in the Upanishads. According to Aitareya Upanishad, 2/1/5, he had realised the existence of the Atma, the pure consciousness, while still in the womb. The Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 1/4/10, says that

he had realised Brahm, the supreme transcendental Lord, and hence he is treated as being on the same high spiritual pedestal as Manu and Surya.

According to Shiva Puran, Kailash Khanda, 11/12, he had learnt about Pranav, the ethereal form of Brahm and revealed as the sound OM, from Kumarsvaami, also known as Shanmukha or Subramanya.

Sage Aatreya was his disciple.

Amongst his great teachings is the Vamdeo Gita. It is one of the sixteen minor Gitas in the epic Mahabharata. It occurs in Shantiparva, Chapters 92-94, and has 94 verses. It is in the form of a dialogue between sage Vamdeo and king Vasumanas. It has been recounted by Bhishma to Yudishthir. The duties of kings are the main theme of this Gita.

The name Vamdeo has other connotations also. Vamdeo is one of the eleven forms of Rudra or Lord Shiva. His divine consort is known as Vaamaa.

The *Panch Brahm Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes him as being the third name or form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, in verse nos. 10-14. It says—“The third form (of Brahm) is known as *Vamdeo*—basically because Lord Shiva’s general demeanours are at odds with the way the world likes to live. He is a renunciate par-excellence and lives completely submerged in perpetual meditation, not at all bothered by the niceties and attractions of this material world. This life style would be treated as unconventional and odd by the less-enlightened creatures of the world who remain submerged, neck-deep, in enjoying the material comforts and pleasures of this world. So it is natural they would call him ‘Vamdeo’—the odd, weird, strange and anomalous God. This would be very evident if Shiva is compared with Vishnu and Brahma, the other two Gods of the Trinity. Vishnu is very much engrossed in the upkeep of this world because it is part of his duties—as he is the protector, sustainer and nourisher of this creation. Brahma also remains neck-deep involved in this creation—because had it not been so he would never have explored means to create creatures who would copulate to propagate themselves. It is only Shiva who remains aloof from this swamp. Further, the word ‘Shiva’ itself means ‘one who is auspicious, beautiful, truthful, enlightened and eternal.’

Iconographically, the face of Shiva pointing to the north is called Vamdeo. This form of Brahm is a symbol of the fire element and stands for the power to purify, absorb and purge everything that comes in contact with it—like the fire that burns all impurities and brings out the inherent natural shine in an entity. He is said to rule over this element.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its Brahman 1 describes the five forms of Brahm but in a different way in the context of creation. It says that Vamdeo is the second form of Shiva who is treated in this Upanishad as being synonymous with Brahm (Brahman 1, verse no. 1). Let us examine what it has to say—“The second subtle form of Shiva is called Vamdeo who produced a sweet fluid which was like sweet water, and the earth was floated on it. In other words, the first primordial ‘water’ from which the earth emerged refers to the vast cosmic ether that is symbolised by the salty ocean, and this second sweet ‘water’ refers to the underground water that is found under the solid surface of the earth. It is this water that is found in wells and springs. Since it surrounds the earth as a ring underneath the surface, the solid outer surface of the earth where terrestrial creatures and trees grow is virtually floating on this inner ring of sweet water. The salty water of the ocean floats on the surface of the earth and not vice versa.

The *Panch Brahm Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 10-14 describe the third form of Brahm called ‘Vamdeo’]. To quote—“The form of Brahm as ‘Vamdeo’ has the following grand virtues—he is a bestower of great knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment; he is like fire personified (i.e. he has the astounding potential and vigour as possessed by the fire, he is as powerful and potent as fire, as purifying and rejuvenating as the fire which is the third element of creation after earth and water).

He is illuminated with the light that is a metaphor for knowledge and wisdom. It is as brilliant and splendid as millions of suns (signifying the power of knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment) [10].

He is a personification of the virtues of Anand (extreme sense of bliss, happiness and joys, of ecstasy and exhilaration, of beatitude and felicity). The Sam Veda with all its melodious connotations and singing patterns is its revealed form. The Sam Veda is usually sung melodiously, set to beautiful music with all its captivating charm, as opposed to other Vedas which are chanted or recited in unison or even read quietly in seclusion, and therefore it fits in well with the observation that this form of Brahm is a personification of Anand—for music is indeed exhilarating and uplifting for the soul.

Since singing obliges one to have a soothing and melodious voice, a voice which is sweet and pleasant, is mellowed and steady, and is able to sustain long notes and tones while singing, this form of Brahm is a personification of these virtues. A melodious, pleasant, welcoming and sweet voice is the best gift that a man possesses; it endears him to everyone and at all places and time. Further, singing of the Sam Veda requires special skills, and all these qualities would distinguish a man from the rest. In other words, Brahm is not an ordinary God, but it is the sweetest, the most skilled, and the wisest entity in creation. Another connotation is this—‘the mellowed from of sound as indicated by the first vowels of Sanskrit language—viz. ‘A’ as in ‘a man’, and ‘Aa’ as in ‘master’ are indicative of Brahm’s virtues that signify the origin of creation. This is because to pronounce the letters ‘A’ and ‘Aa’ one has to open one’s mouth which symbolise the start of the process of creation.

He is revealed in the form of the Ahavaniya holy fire, the best of the fires. This fire is lit at the beginning to invoke the Gods and welcome them, hence is like the herald of good and auspicious intentions in creation. [11].

Since Gyan is a personified form of this Brahm, it is very potent and powerful in slaying one’s enemies (represented by ignorance and delusions). It is empowered with great authority, strength and potentials in this respect.

This Brahm is ‘Avaya’, i.e. it is imperishable, undiminished and infinite, and a personification of unmatched Shakti, i.e. it is a fount of divine cosmic energy, stupendous strength, great powers and astounding potentials.

His complexion is Shukla (white) in colour. [This word is indicative of, one, semen which is a metaphor for vitality, potency and stamina, symbolising its ability to create and propagate the creation, and second, the Sata Guna which is the best, the most auspicious and noblest virtue in creation. This word ‘Shukla’ also refers to the Shukla Yajur Veda.]

In spite of the fact that he is such an exalted entity, he has the low quality called Tama in him. This is because if we are expected to take it for granted that everything in existence is Brahm personified, then it obviously includes the darker side of creation along with the brighter side. The darker side is symbolised by the word ‘Tama’—meaning dark, while the brighter side is symbolised by the word ‘Shukla’—meaning white. In other words, Vamdeo Brahm possesses the unique and often paradoxical qualities that defy understanding. It is not without reason that Brahm has not been able to be defined even by the Vedas, and they threw up the towel, saying ‘Neti Neti’—not this not this.

He (Vamdeo Brahm) is completely enlightened, wise and realised. No knowledge escapes it; it is a personification of these auspicious virtues [12].

He (Vamdeo Brahm) is not only the regulator and controller of the three worlds, but also has revealed himself in the form of these three worlds. The three worlds are the ones revealed in the form of the three words uttered by the creator at the time of creation—viz. ‘Bhu’ referring to the terrestrial world, ‘Bhuvaha’ to the world above the earth, i.e. the

sky, and 'Swaha' meaning the heavens where the Gods live. These three worlds also symbolically refer to the three states in which the consciousness exists—viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or the dreaming state, and Sushupta or the deep sleep state which correspond to the Vishwa, Taijas and Pragy forms of existence.

He is a bestower of all good fortunes and auspiciousness to all the creatures in creation. He gives the rewards to all according to the deeds done by them [13].

He is honoured by the eight 'Akchars'. [That is, he is praised by a Mantra having eight letters or syllables. This Mantra is 'OM Namoha Mahadevaye'.] It also means that he has revealed himself as the eight elements of creation that are 'imperishable, eternal and infinite' by nature—i.e. are 'Akchar'.

This supreme Divinity lives in the heart that is symbolically like a divine lotus with eight petals. This vision of the heart as a lotus of eight petals is expounded in the Upanishads dealing with Yoga and Tantra. [14]. (10-14).

The Varaaha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 4, verse nos. 34-42, 44 employ the metaphor of the bird (parrot) and an ant to describe the two types of creatures and the way they take to their Mukti or Moksha (spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation) citing the case of sage Shukdeo who was a parrot, and sage Vamdeo who represented an ant.

In its Canto 4, verse no. 34 it says that 'Sage *Shukdeo* (the parrot saint and son of sage Veda Vyas) found Jivan Mukti as did sage Vamdeo. But there was a subtle difference between the two types of Muktis. Those wise people who follow the path shown by sage Shukdeo find the ultimate liberation and deliverance for themselves in such a way that they do not have to come back into this world again, i.e. they obtain final emancipation and salvation.'

On the other hand, in its Canto 4, verse no. 34 it says that 'those who follow the example set by sage *Vamdeo* repeatedly die and take birth in this world. This cycle would continue for them till the time they find the Truth by practicing Yoga in relation to the profound philosophy known as Sankhya Shastra, understanding its principle tenets and basic philosophy, besides painstakingly adhering to the theory of Karma (doing deeds correctly, with the proper perspective and wisdom, so that no consequence accrue which would create a baggage that is carried over to the next birth as destiny that forces the creature to enter a fresh cycle of birth and death). It is then only that they can get Mukti.'

In its Canto 4, verse no. 39 it says that those who practice Yoga do obtain Mukti just like sage Vamdeo did, but this involves due diligence and great effort. Followers of the path of Yoga are said to be the followers of the path shown by Vamdeo because they believe in obtaining Mukti through making diligent and hard efforts symbolised by their doing Yoga which is rigorous and involves painstaking efforts over a long period of time. Yoga is fraught with a lot of danger and hurdle as compared to the path of finding Mukti through the pursuance of the path of Gyan or acquisition of knowledge and enlightenment based on meditation and contemplation, study of the scriptures and pondering deeply upon their doctrines and other such methods that do not require rigid exercises and hard labour as required by Yoga.

³Sage *Shukdeo*—He was the son of the legendary seer and renowned sage Veda Vyas. He was highly respected and was born of the celestial maiden named Ghrataachi when she had taken the form of a parrot, called Shuka in Sanskrit, to produce Shukdeo. He had his education under the expert guidance of his father Veda Vyas (refer Mahopanishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-20, and the entire Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition). He was fortunate enough to have as his wise Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) the legendary king Janak, the father of Sita of the Ramayan fame and the most self-realised and enlightened king of his time (refer Mahopanishad of

Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 28-77) and Lord Shiva himself (refer Shukar Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda which was preached by Lord Shiva to Shukdeo).

His self restraint was so profound that the celestial Apsara, the dancing damsel of the court of Indra, the king of Gods, failed to trap him in her honey-trap of lust and passions. Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug. In an incident narrated in Maho-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 21-27 it is described how sage Shukdeo had to wait for twenty-one days before king Janak granted him an audience to test his self control over anger, ego and self-pride of being a son of an enlightened father of the stature of sage Veda Vyas as well as his sincerity and steadfastness of purpose which are important virtues that must be present in a student of spiritualism and important criterion by which his eligibility as a disciple can be judged.

The Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda describes him as a truly Brahman-realised sage along with sage Sankaadi in its Canto 1, verse no. 47.

Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of Hindu mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug (which is the last of the four-Yug cycle).

⁴*Sanatkumar* and others called *Sankaadi Rishis*—Sage Sanatkumar is considered as one of the four Manas Putras or the mental-born sons of the creator Brahma. The other three are Sanak, Sanatsujat and Sanandan. They are regarded in a perpetual state of boyhood. Together they are called ‘Sanakaadi Rishis’.

Sanatkumar had taught the greatness of Vishnu to demon Vritraasur, the enemy of Indra, the king of Gods. He also taught spiritual wisdom to sage Narad, the celestial sage.

Sanatsujat taught spiritual wisdom to Dhritrashtra who was the blind father of the Kauravas of the epic Mahabharat fame. Sanak is said to an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu. Sanandan is regarded as the ancient preacher of the Sankhya Shastra, even more ancient than Kapil.

Sanatkumar, along with sages Pippalaad and Angira, had approached sage Atharva to ask him about the highest form of meditation, the different aspects of OM and the culmination of spiritual journey by realising Brahm in the form of Shambhu, one of the names of Lord Shiva, in Atharva Veda’s Atharva-shikha Upanishad.

It is narrated in the Brihajjabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Brahman 7, verse no. 8, that he had gone to Lord Kalagnirudra, one of the forms of Lord Shiva and who had first revealed this Upanishad to one sage Bhusund (Brahmans 1-6) to learn about the metaphysical importance and spiritual value of the Rudraksha beads. Rudraksha beads are the seeds of the tree *Eleocarpus ganitrus*.

According to Kalagni Rudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Sanatkumar was taught how to wear the Tripundra, the three lines marked on the forehead of all Hindus, by Lord Kalagnirudra himself.]

23. Lord Maheswar, the Great God (‘Ishwar’) and Lord of all the other gods, is truthful, is eternal, unchanging, steady and always omnipresent everywhere, is a (neutral and dispassionate) witness to all and everything (that is happening in this creation), is eternally blissful and happy, has no comparison or parallel in this creation, and is indescribable and incomprehensible.

The Lord or Bhagwan is also known as ‘Girish’ as he is the Lord of mountains. [This is because the symbolic abode of Shiva is said to be on the higher reaches of snow-covered Mt. Kailash. The reason for Shiva living in mountains is that he is the greatest

Yogi or ascetic, and for an ascetic it is prescribed in the scriptures that he makes mountains and forests his abode. This is to help him in his meditation and contemplation or other forms of spiritual exercises. Mountains are places that give serenity, solitude, peace and tranquillity to the soul. They are the natural habitat for those who wish to pursue spiritual path of meditation and contemplation because they provide the aspirant with the perfect environment that fits their spiritual needs. Besides this, the mountains are metaphors for areas on earth where the positive energy of the consciousness is at its peak—and this is physically depicted in the form of high peaks of mountains that almost touch the sky.]

We say that the Lord lives there or anything else about the Lord only because we imagine it to be so, as it is just not possible to know about him (23).

24. Oh Suvrata (i.e. one who keeps auspicious vows)! The Lord's Maya (i.e. his delusion-creating tricks and highly mystical powers) is so confounding and mysterious that no one can be certain about him or about anything related to him so much so that even I, Brahma, the creator, and Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation, are mystified and most confounded and perplexed regarding the supreme Lord. It's very difficult to get out of the snare cast by this Maya of the Lord. [Refer verse no. 31.

Briefly, Maya is the delusion creating power of Brahm, the Supreme Being. It was Maya that was used by Brahm to weave this fabric of creation just like a magician conjures up a magnificent scene on stage out of thin air. In the present context, Maya is a veil that surrounds and hides the 'truth'. One cannot know Brahm in entirety because of the shroud of Maya that surrounds the truth about Brahm. It is because of this veil of Maya that an ignorant person thinks that Brahm and the rest of creation are different and separate entities, that therefore Sharav, Rudra, Shiva, Brahma, Vishnu and all other such forms of the Divinity are independent Gods that are separate and distinct from one another and from Brahm. A person who thinks in this term is deluded. He forgets that the external form or features by which these Gods are recognised and known are the gross forms of the same universal Divinity known as Brahm, and that these gross forms are not the 'truthful' forms of Brahm because the latter is the cosmic 'Consciousness' that is a most sublime and subtle entity instead of being gross in any way. The factor of 'Consciousness' is the same in all the external forms that Brahm has taken, and therefore it is only out of ignorance induced by Maya that one thinks these forms as being separate from Brahm. It is out of the deluding affects of Maya that one is unable to know and come to grips about the 'truth of Brahm'. A Brahm-realised person is one who has overcome this Maya and is able to recognise the truth that exists behind the misleading external façade.]

But this Maya can be easily got over with by remembering or meditating upon the holy lotus-like feet of the Lord. [In other words, if one takes the shelter of the Lord and surrenders himself to the Lord's holy feet, then the deluding effects of Maya do not touch such a devotee, Maya cannot cast its magical charm on him or in any way affect him because of the Lord's grace. Maya is regarded as a maid servant of the Lord, and when the Lord is pleased by someone it is natural that the maid servant would keep her hands off from such a person. Refer Ramcharit Manas of Goswami Tuslsidas, Uttar Kand, Doha 71, Kha; and Doha 72, Chaupai line no. 1.] (24).

25. [Now, after having praised Lord Shiva as the great God, this Upanishad moves on to praise Lord Vishnu in verse nos. 25-28 and establishing him on a high pedestal which is equivalent to that occupied by Shiva. This is very significant as it removes any doubts as to which of the two Lords is superior. In fact, a wise man would understand that both Shiva and Vishnu, and for that matter Brahma and all the other Gods are merely different forms of one Great God known as Brahm. Brahm has taken so many forms in order to fulfil myriad functions of this creation. It is a clear symbolism of delegation of authority by the central Authority known as Brahm who is like the Emperor of creation. Refer Tripadvibhuta Maha Narayan Upanishad, Purva Kanda, Canto 1.]

It is Lord Vishnu¹ who has created this entire creation. [This puts Vishnu on the same exalted pedestal as Brahm, the Supreme Being. In fact, this refers to the Viraat Purush, the all-encompassing, all-pervading and almighty macrocosmic invisible gross body of Brahm from which the rest of the visible and the invisible creation emerged, including Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder. Vishnu and Viraat Purush are regarded as the same Divinity having two names; they are synonymous with each other. But observed closely, the Viraat is the subtler form of Vishnu. When incarnations are being referred to, it is Vishnu who becomes relevant because he represents the slightly grosser aspect of Divinity (Brahm) as compared to the Viraat Purush. When the finer aspects of Brahm's divine virtues and cosmic powers of Consciousness are being referred to, such as the Lord being omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing, then the Viraat Purush is implied. The term 'Viraat Purush' literally means the Lord who has a colossus form that is as vast, measureless and fathomless as this creation. This is the all-inclusive form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, as Vishnu. That is, Vishnu and the Viraat are synonymous with each other. The only probable difference between them is the level of subtlety of their existence—for while the Viraat is the subtler form of Brahm even before Brahma the creator came into existence, Vishnu is the less subtler form of Brahm as he is a contemporary of Brahma and one of the Trinity Gods. While the Viraat Purush is the cosmic form of Brahm from whom the entire creation came into being, Vishnu is that form of Brahm which is responsible for taking care of the creation once it came into being.]

Since on the one hand all the creatures are said to be born from a tiny fraction of Vishnu's body (or the body of the Viraat Purush) and therefore represent Vishnu in a microcosmic form, and on the other hand it is me, Brahma the creator, who is regarded as the creator of all the world and its creatures, it follows that in fact it is the Supreme Being known as the Viraat Purush or Brahm who has done both in as much as he has played the roles of a creator as well as that of a sustainer of the creation—i.e. he has subtly transformed himself as Brahma to create this world, and then assumed the role of Vishnu to become a sustainer and protector of what has been created by Brahma. [In other words, the Supreme Being known as the Viraat Purush plays two roles—as Brahma he creates, and as Vishnu he sustains and protects the creation.] (25).

[Note—¹*Vishnu* or Narayan—Lord *Vishnu* has many names such as Vasudeo, Narayan, Viraat Purush etc.

The word 'Vishnu' consists of two components—'Vishwa' meaning the world or the entire creation, and 'Anu' meaning an atom. Hence, this is made up of atoms called Vishnu, and therefore the latter pervades throughout this creation.

According to this verse, the whole creation is a manifestation of Vishnu, and therefore it represents Vishnu at the microcosmic level of creation. Vishnu is put on the same pedestal here as the Viraat Purush because the Upanishads say that the creation is created from the Viraat, and with Brahma the creator because this creation is created by him.

The *Viraat Purush* is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, the Supreme Being, from whose body the rest of the creation, both the visible and the invisible, is said to have been formed; the Viraat embodies the whole creation in his own self. The word 'Viraat' itself means measureless, infinite, colossus and vast. The manifestation of Brahm as the Viraat includes Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder.

Usually, Vishnu and Viraat Purush are regarded as the same Divinity having two names; they are synonymous with each other. But observed closely, the Viraat is the subtler form of Vishnu. When incarnations are being referred to, it is Vishnu who becomes relevant because he represents the slightly grosser aspect of Divinity (Brahm) as compared to the Viraat Purush. When the finer aspects of Brahm's divine virtues and cosmic powers of Consciousness are being referred to, such as the Lord being omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing, then the Viraat Purush is implied. The term 'Viraat Purush' literally means the Lord who has a colossus form that is as vast, measureless and fathomless as this creation. This is the all-inclusive form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, as Vishnu. That is, Vishnu and the Viraat are synonymous with each other. The only probable difference between them is the level of subtlety of their existence—for while the Viraat is the subtler form of Brahm even before Brahma the creator came into existence, Vishnu is the less subtler form of Brahm as he is a contemporary of Brahma and one of the Trinity Gods. While the Viraat Purush is the cosmic form of Brahm from whom the entire creation came into being, Vishnu is that form of Brahm which is responsible for taking care of the creation once it came into being.

Since on the one hand all the creatures are said to be born from a tiny fraction of Vishnu's body (or the body of the Viraat Purush) and therefore represent Vishnu in a microcosmic form, and on the other hand it Brahma, the creator, who is regarded as the creator of all the world and its creatures, it follows that in fact it is the Supreme Being known as the Brahm, in his cosmic form as the Viraat or Vishnu, who has done both the jobs of creation and sustenance—i.e. he has subtly transformed himself as Brahma to create this world, and then assumed the role of Vishnu to become a sustainer and protector of what has been created by Brahma. [In other words, the Supreme Being known as the Viraat Purush or Vishnu plays two roles—as Brahma he creates, and as Vishnu he sustains and protects the creation.

Lord Vishnu, as the Viraat Purush, is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and it is from this form of Brahm that the creator of the visible creation, i.e. Brahma the old patriarch of creation, had emerged atop a divine lotus that sprouted from the navel of Vishnu. Lord Vishnu is the sustainer and the care-taker of the world. He is the most important of the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma, the creator, and Shiva, the concluder. It's easy to produce and destroy, but a mammoth task to sustain and nourish what has been born.

Vishnu is also known by the name of *Vasudeo* because he is the sustainer and protector of creation, signifying his undisputed lordship over all the essential elements in Nature, called the Vasus of which there are eight in number, and which were created at the beginning of creation to help sustain the upcoming creation. It ought to be noted here that Vishnu is also called Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm, and it is from this form of Brahm that the creator of the visible creation, i.e. Brahma the old

patriarch of creation, had emerged atop a divine lotus that sprouted from the navel of Vishnu. In other words, everything has its origin in the supreme Brahm.

Lord *Narayan* and Vishnu are synonymously treated in the scriptures. The etymology of the word *Narayan* is—the primary one who has his abode in the primordial causal waters of the cosmos; one who is the abode of all living creatures; one who has his residence in the bosom of all living beings as their Atma or pure self or consciousness; one who is the final goal of all spiritual pursuits. When the transcendental Supreme Being decided to initiate creation, his first revelation was *Hiranyagarbha* which represented the macrocosmic subtle body of creation, and from it emerged the *Viraat Purush* who is the macrocosmic gross body of creation. This ‘*Viraat*’ is literally the vast, infinite, measureless, fathomless and colossal form of the supreme Brahm, a form which is all-pervasive, all-encompassing, all-inclusive, immanent and omnipresent in creation. The ‘*Purush*’ is literally an entity that lives inside a dwelling, here referring to as the pure consciousness that lives as the Atma of all the living beings. (*Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, 2/5/18-19). This *Viraat Purush* is therefore the vast and all-inclusive cosmic Consciousness that entered the gross body of the creature and found a comfortable abode in the heart as his Atma. This *Viraat Purush* at the macro level of creation is known as Vishnu, the one who lives immanently in this creation, inseparable from it and forming its integral part.

Since *Narayan* or Vishnu is the term used to imply the *Viraat Purush* who is Brahm personified at the macrocosmic level of creation, it follows that *Narayan* or Vishnu is the supreme Lord of creation. It is from him that the rest of the creation has emerged. All forces of creation, right from their origin till their conclusion, have this *Narayan* representing Brahm as their primary source. It is *Narayan* that is the eternal fountain from which they all the dynamic forces of creation derive their independent strengths, abilities, authorities, potentials and powers. The primary forces are represented by Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, protector and nourisher, and Shiva the concluder. The other elements of creation are the sky, air, fire, water and earth. *Indra* represents the chief force that controls all other unit forces of creation, and therefore he has been depicted as the ‘king of Gods’ because all the Gods are deemed to personify one or the other aspects of the divine forces of creation which are responsible for controlling the various facets of the multifarious and varied creation. For example, *Aditya* or the Sun gives light, heat and energy to the creation in their twelve forms, including the visible Sun in the sky. The *Vasus* represent the essential assets that are needed to sustain all forms of life on this earth. *Rudras* represent the dynamic and forceful nature of a creature that helps it be proactive and assertive in this world, to protect the assets generated by him and give protection to the society and his dependants by the use of force if necessary. And so on and so forth.

Narayan or Vishnu has *dark blue hue* as his complexion, symbolizing the blue colour of the endless sky which implies that wherever there is sky Lord *Narayan* is invariably present at the place. Lord Vishnu has all the virtues of the sky element—viz. he is eternal, infinite, fathomless, detached, omnipresent, all-encompassing, all-pervading, neutral, detached, dispassionate, and the bearer of the entire creation. This colour of Vishnu stands for the sky element of creation.

He has *four arms* signifying the four quarters or quadrants of the compass, implying that the Lord controls and protects all the corners of the creation.

The *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the *Atharva Veda* describes the various weapons of Lord Vishnu as follows—“He looks glorious with his many weapons which always accompany him. They are the *Sudarshan Chakra* (the serrated discus that is designed like a circular saw), the *Panchjanya Shankh* (the conch with five stripes), the *Padma* (the lotus), the *Kaumodki Gadaa* (the mace), the *Nandak Khang* (the sword), the

Shaarnag Dhanush (the bow), the Musal or the Gadaa (the mace, the pestle, the hammer, the rammer, the dumbbell), the Parigha (the spear or spike or lancet) and other such divine weapons.”

Now, let us examine these weapons and their significance.

His *Shankha* (conch) stands for the sky as well as the wind element because the conch is hollow and it makes a resounding sound when air is blown into it. This sound represents the cosmic Naad, the background sound in ether from which, it is visualized by ancient sages and seers, that the entire creation emerged and derived its primary energy and dynamism. It is this Naad from which all forms of the languages are created, and the sound of the conch is so loud that it is heard for long distances. Hence, the sound of the conch stands for the generation and the propagation of life as well as of knowledge.

It is known as the *Panchjanya Shankha*. There is a legend associated with this *Panchjanya Shankha* (conch). There was a demon named Panchajanya. He lived in a miniscule form inside a conch at the bottom of the ocean. Once he ate the son of sage Saandipani. Lord Krishna had killed this demon, and retrieved the sage’s son from the Yamloka, the abode of the God of death known as Yama. Krishna had taken this Shankha then, and it is called ‘Panchanjanya’ after the demon who lived in it.

The Shankha has a great symbolism when used by Lord Vishnu. It proclaims the presence of the Lord when he blows it. The sound of the conch is heard far and wide. According to some accounts, the conch alone stands for all the five elements of creation—viz. the sky, the air, the water, the fire and the earth. Now, let us analyse how the Shankha or conch stands for the five elements as observed here. The conch is hollow from the inside, indicating the sky or space element. It produces sound when air is blown into it, indicating the presence of the air element. The snail had this as its dwelling, and this snail lives in water. Thus, the conch indicates the fire element because it is this fire that helps a creature to survive even in water. The conch is formed in water and not on dry land like trees and terrestrial animals—indicating its origin in the water element. The body of the conch is hard calcium like the rocks and solid surface of the earth, indicating the presence of earth element as its integral part.

His *Padma* (the Lotus flower) stands for the water element as this flower grows in water and cannot survive without it.

The Padma or Lotus is a symbol of purity and cleanliness amongst the surrounding filth because the dirty water of the pond where the lotus grows does not stick to the petals of the lotus flower. It also signifies the fact that the Lord accepts only the best and the auspicious from amongst all in this creation because the lotus flower grows in dirty water of the pond but is untouched by its filth. So these divine virtues of purity and cleanliness are one of the many glorious virtues of Lord Vishnu.

The word ‘Padma’ also refers to the origin of creation because the creator Brahma was born atop the lotus that emerged from the navel of the Viraat Purush at the time of creation, as well as the fact that the opening of the bud of the flower is an imaginative way of depicting the unfolding or the emergence of creation from the primeval water. It symbolizes the continuously evolving world because lotus springs forth from water, and this world also springs forth from the causal waters of the cosmos and then grows in the vast ethereal space of the sky.

It also regarded as being closely related to the Sun and that is why it opens up when the Sun rises, and closes at sunset. Since the light of the Sun is a metaphor for wisdom, knowledge, enlightenment and purity of thoughts and actions, the Lotus in the hands of Vishnu indicates the presence of these eclectic virtues in the Lord, or that the Lord symbolises these auspicious and divine virtues and qualities of creation. The Padma is also a symbol of Goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of good fortunes and wealth. Laxmi is depicted in iconography as being seated on a divine lotus in full bloom.

The *Chakra* (discus) is a weapon of Vishnu that is designed like a serrated wheel and is depicted as being brilliantly illuminated and glowing hot like the fire. It is also ruthless like the fire and destroys everything falling in its path. Hence, it stands for the fire element as well as the power of the Lord to destroy all obstacles. It also signifies that Vishnu is able to reduce to ashes all the corruptions and evil forces of creation. The Chakra also stands for the cosmic mind, because like the restlessness and the tendency of the mind to continuously fly from one subject to another without pause, the Chakra too keeps on revolving and flying off to pursue its targets relentlessly on the instructions of Vishnu. Further, the Chakra also is used as a metaphor for this creation which has been visualized in the form of a cosmic wheel.

This Chakra is called *Sudarshan Chakra*. The word ‘Sudarshan’ means ‘one that is auspicious, pleasing and comforting in appearance or to behold’. The ‘Chakra’ means ‘a circle or ring’ and it refers to a circular weapon which is like a round iron saw with hardened and sharp teeth. It is this invincible weapon that Vishnu uses more often than the rest to overcome the evil forces of creation.

According to legend, it was gifted to Vishnu by Lord Shiva when the latter was pleased by the former’s offering of worship to him at Kashi (Varanasi).

A great chunk of the first half of Canto 7 of the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda is dedicated to this discus.

His *Musal* or *Gadaa* (mace, rammer, hammer, battle-ram, dumbbell) stands for the earth element because it is as heavy and gross as the latter. This Gadaa also stands for the cosmic intellect because the intellect is used to keep a strict control over one’s wayward mind and its inherent fickleness, over one’s sense organs and their inherent restlessness etc. This signifies the ability of the Lord to be able to exercise infallible control over all aspects of creation. Being a metaphor for the intellect, the Gadaa also symbolizes the Lord’s ability to separate the auspicious and the righteous from the evil and the pervert, or to forcefully subdue the evil, pervert and corrupting forces of creation symbolized by the wayward and restless mind as well as the indulgent organs of the body.

The Gadaa is known as the *Kaumodki Gadaa*. It has the following connotation. The word ‘Kaumodki’ consists of two parts—viz. ‘Ku’ meaning ‘earth’, and ‘moda’ meaning ‘happiness. Hence, the mace of Lord Vishnu gives happiness to all the righteous creatures on earth by protecting them against the evil forces represented by demons.

It is called a ‘Gadaa’ because it was moulded from the strong bones of a demon named ‘Gadaa’, and hence bears his name. The demon gave up his bones to respect the wishes of the creator Brahma, who then got a mace crafted out of it at the hand of Vishwakarma, the God’s engineer, and kept it with Varun, the Water God. It was given to Lord Krishna at the request of Agni, the Fire God, when the former had got the Khaandava forest consumed by fire.

The *Nandak Khanga* (sword)—The word ‘Nandak’ means ‘one which gives joy and happiness to the Gods’. The Agnipuran, Chapter 245, describes an interesting episode regarding this Nandak sword. Once, the creator Brahma was performing a fire sacrifice on the banks of river Ganges. A demon named Lohaasur (the demon with a body of iron) came to disturb it. Suddenly, a male warrior-like figure emerged from Brahma’s body. He got transformed into a sword which was given by the assembled Gods to Lord Maha Vishnu who used it to kill the demon and chop his body into pieces. The Lord then accepted the sword as one of his permanent companions, and named it ‘Nandak’—the one that gave happiness and joys to the Gods because it helped to kill the demon who was the cause of their troubles.

The sword called Nandak symbolizes the grand virtues of erudition, sagacity, enlightenment and wisdom. It is the powerful intellect that is able to discriminate

between the right and the wrong, and cut through all obstacles in the path of righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility and virtuousness, i.e. the path of Dharma.

The bow called *Saarang*—This symbolizes the cosmic senses of the Viraat Purush. This bow of Lord Vishnu is also known as the *Shaankhya Dhanush* (bow). It was made from the bones of demon named Shaankhya-chuda after he was killed by Lord Shiva.

The *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 7, paragraph no. 68 says that the Lord's chest is adorned by the Srivatsa, the Kaustav and the Vanmaalaa. Now, let us see what they are.

The *Srivatsa*—This is the mark of the foot of sage Bhrigu which he had caste on the chest of Vishnu ones when he got annoyed upon the Lord. The Lord is so enamoured of his devotees that instead of taking umbrage at this disrespect shown by the sage and punishing him for his misdemeanour, he had blessed the sage that his footprint would always remain on his chest as one of the jewels worn by Lord Vishnu. However, Laxmi was so angry at the temerity of sage Brighu that she cursed that henceforth she, in the form of wealth and material abundance, would always shun a Brahmin; it is believed that this is the reason why Brahmins, who are otherwise of a high birth, are always serving others in the society who are junior to them by birth for their monetary needs.

The *Kaustav Mani*—This is a glittering gem worn by Lord Vishnu, and it covers the sign of the Srivatsa. It was obtained at the time of the legendary churning of the ocean and automatically got lodged on the Lord's chest. {Mahabharat, Adiparva, 18.}

The *Vanmaalaa*—This is a garland (mala) worn by Vishnu and is made of flowers of the forest/wild (Van). The flowers are of a wide variety with those of the Kadamba tree (*Nauclea cadamba*) being in the center or the dominant ones. Sometimes, marigold, daisy or xanthium flowers are shown as being used in this garland.

Lord Vishnu has twelve close attendants, and their names have been given in the *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 7, paragraph 49 in the context of worshipping them while offering oblations to the worship instrument, called the Yantra. These attendants are headed by Vishwakshen. The list of the twelve attendants is as follows—Vishwakshen, Aachakraaye, Vichakraaye, Suchakraaye, Dhi-chakraaye, Sanchakraaye, Jawalchakraaye, Krudholakaaye, Maholkaaye, Viryolkaaye, Vidholkaaye, and Sastrolkaaye.

The *vehicle* of Narayan or Vishnu is the bird called *Garud* (eagle or heron), and it symbolizes the spoken word. This is because spoken words are transmitted from one point to another by the medium of the sky just like the bird flying from one tree to another. Words and ideas are transmitted from one person to the other like the bird flying off from one tree and perching on another. That is why speech is likened to a bird. Garud is regarded as a personification of the knowledge contained in the Vedas because this knowledge is transmitted through the means of speech. Besides this point, there is another way of looking at this aspect. The knowledge contained in the Vedas help a wise man to reach his spiritual destination much like Lord Vishnu employing the services of Garud if he wants to go any place. The eagle is known to have a long range of vision and flies high up in the sky. The Garud is able to have a broad perspective of the sight seen below because from its high perch in the sky. This indicates the virtues of Vishnu in having wider knowledge and broad vision of life as well as to remain aloof from the humdrum affairs of the deluding world below. The Garud is extremely fast and reaches its destination in a fraction of a second—indicating the almost instantaneous reach of the Lord in all the directions of the creation. Since the Gurud is able to fly it also stands for the imaginative abilities of the mind, and since it has a penetrating vision that sees long distances he stands for the sharp and wise intellect that has foresight and deep insight.

Narayan or Vishnu is said to recline on the bedstead of *Sheshnath* or the legendary serpent of thousand hoods who floats on the calm waters of the *Kshirsagar*. Now, let us examine their symbolisms.

The word 'Shesh' means 'leftover or remainder', and 'Naath' means the Lord. At the time of conclusion of creation, 'something' remains from which the new creation would come into being. It is this 'cosmic entity' into which the previous creation collapses and dissolves at the time of its conclusion. It is from this 'cosmic entity', the 'remainder' of the last creation, that the first signs of the new creation would emerge. Hence, the Seshnath represents the cosmic entity that remains after the creation ends. He is the 'Lord' (Naath) of what remains of this creation. Since Lord Vishnu is the unquestioned 'Lord and the Supreme Being' of this creation who remains even after everything comes to an end, and it is from him that the next phase of creation emerges, he is depicted in the Purans and in iconography as being reclining on the Seshnath. Sheshnath also represents the sum total of all the souls in their subtle forms which have been leftovers from the previous generation or cycle of creation, hibernating and waiting for the opportune time to remerge as a new creation.

In this context, the *Kshirsagar*, or the ocean of celestial milk called Amrit upon which this Sheshnath floats, is like the preservative ambrosial fluid which sustains life and gives it nourishment during the time it is in hibernating phase before the commencement of new creation or springing forth of a new generation of living organisms. The Kshirsagar also represents the cosmic primordial gel from which the creation was moulded by the Viraat Purush at the time of creation.

The Kshirsagar, which is the celestial ocean of milk indicating Amrit or the ambrosial fluid of eternity and bliss, also signifies that Lord Vishnu is perpetually in a state of blissfulness, beatitude and felicity as he is constantly surrounded by its waters. That is why he is depicted as reclining blissfully and peacefully on the back of the Sheshnath while the latter floats on this ambrosia of blissfulness and immortality.

Again, since Amrit is a bestower of eternity and immortality, Lord Vishnu too is immortal and eternal because he is drenched by the spray of the waters of the Kshirsagar as it heaves and splashes against the body of the Seshnath.

This ocean known as Kshirsagar indicates the primordial fluid from which the rest of the creation is formed, and hence it is the 'causal water' or the causative factor which is at the foundation of all living creation coming into being; it is the wellspring of life in all its varied forms. The scriptures describe that earlier there was water everywhere, and from this primordial fluid emerged the earth and the fire element that kept this earth warm, making it habitable and enabling it to harbour life forms. This fact has been affirmed in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 1, Brahman 2, verse no. 2, and the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, the Book of Genesis, verse nos. 9-11.

Lord Vishnu's name first appears in the Rig Veda, 1/154-156. The Lord represents all that is virtuous, noble, righteous, auspicious, high and glorious in this creation. He is all pervading, all encompassing and omnipresent.

He is a personification of Yagya, or the various religious sacrifices (Shatpath Brahman, 1/1/2/13). The Lord has taken numerous forms and revealed himself on different occasions to uphold good and righteous, and trounce bad and evil. Lord Vishnu is also depicted as a synonymous deity for Brahm; he is Brahm personified. The scriptures describes the various twenty-four incarnations of Vishnu which are called his 'Vyuhās' of Vishnu. A detailed note appended to the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 7, paragraph no. 18 describes all these incarnations of Lord Vishnu.

The divine glories of Lord Vishnu have been extolled in the *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition which is entirely dedicated to him, but especially in its Canto 1, paragraph 5-6, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 11-12, Canto 7,

paragraph nos. 67-68, and Canto 8, paragraph nos. 17, as well as in *Vishnu Puran*, Chapter 1, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-32, 55-70.

Vishnu is a revered deity honoured by all the Vedas. He appears in all of them, for instance—Rig Veda—1/154-156; 5/3/3; 7/99/1-3; 7/100; Sam Veda—222; 1625-27; Yajur Veda—5/15; 6/4; Atharva Veda—3/27/5.

The *Subalo-panishad* of Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 6 also describes the omnipresent and all pervading form of Narayan.

The *Narayan Sukta* has six verses and it appears in the Shukla Yajur Veda. It reveals the genesis of creation in a very succinct way besides extolling and glorifying the primary Lord of creation known as Narayan. The Rishi of this Sukta is Narayan, the Devta is Aditya (Sun God), and Chanda is Trishtup.

Lord Vishnu is the sustainer, nourisher and the caretaker of the world. Therefore, he is regarded as one of the eight mighty Digpals/Digpaals (the main caretakers and superior custodian Gods) of creation. He is the most important of the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma, the creator, and Shiva, the concluder. It's easy to produce and destroy, but a mammoth task to sustain and nourish what has been born.

According to Purans, even Brahma and Shiva have been created from Vishnu. Brahma emerged sitting atop a divine Lotus that sprouted from the Vishnu's navel in his subtler form as the Viraat Purush, a form that existed before the creation began to take shape in its grosser forms, as he lay reclined in the celestial ocean of milk, known as the Kshir-Sagar, on the bedstead of Sheshnath, the legendary serpent that floated on the surface of this ocean. On the other hand, Shiva is said to be born from his forehead when the Viraat Purush deeply meditated and a few drops of sweat emerged due to intense concentration and effort he was making.

The *Yogattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 2 describes Vishnu as a Maha-Yogi, Maha-Bhuta and Maha-Tapa.

There is a full Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition dedicated to the theme of Vishnu or Narayan. It is called *Narayano-panishad*.

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 1 clearly says that it is Lord Vishnu who had incarnated himself as Lord Ram. In its Canto 5, verse no. 9 it is said that at the time of Lord Ram's departure from earth, all the four divine arms of Lord Vishnu (Shankha or conch, Gadaa or mace, Chakra or discus, and Padma or lotus) that had accompanied the Lord during his incarnation as Ram too went to heaven with the Lord.

The *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 1-4 describe how the various aspects of Lord Vishnu known by different names had accompanied the Lord in his incarnation as Lord Ram. Hence, Sankarshan (one of the forms of Vishnu) incarnated as Laxman, Pradumna as Shatrughan, and Aniruddha as Bharat. These three divine forms of Vishnu became the three brothers of Lord Ram who himself was none other than Lord Vishnu himself. The fact that Lord Ram was the great Lord Vishnu himself is again reiterated in this Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 3, 4/5, 4/10, 4/41, 4/45.

The *Paingalo-panishad* of the Shukla Yajur Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 6 and 10 describes Vishnu in the context of the genesis of creation.

An entire Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition is dedicated to Lord Narayan or Vishnu. It is called 'Tripadvibhuta Maha Narayan Upanishad'.]

26. Everything in existence comes to an end in a regular cycle and in a sequential order when the time comes. Therefore, everything is impermanent, mortal and perishable, and hence false and illusionary. [This is because if they would have been real and truthful

then they would have been permanent and immortal, as 'truth' never ends and it is constant.]

OM salutations! We pay our obeisance and greatest of respect to that Great Lord known as Mahadev (literally the great God or Lord) holding the 'Shul' (the invincible and strong spear or any sharp pointed weapon, here meaning the trident held by Shiva) who devours everything and brings them to an end. [That is, Shiva is the Authority that concludes this creation.]

At the same time our obeisance and greatest of respect are meant for the same Lord Maheshwar (literally the great Ishwar or God or Lord) known as Rudra (or Shiva) who is ever so merciful, gracious, benevolent and munificent on all (26).

27. It is only Lord Vishnu who is the supreme, unique, most exalted, most mystical and most enigmatic divine Authority in creation.

Though Vishnu is the Lord who enjoys everything in this world in his gross worldly form as all living beings in whose body the Lord lives as the universal Consciousness (known as the Atma) that lends their bodies life and vitality to enjoy the material things of the world, the Lord himself is absolutely neutral, constant, steady and un-involved (27).

[Note—That is, though the Lord plays a dual role of being the consumer of everything as the creature on the one hand, and as the consumed thing on the other hand—a paradoxical situation because of the fact that each unit and aspect of creation is one or the other manifestation of the same Brahm—he himself remains constant and steady, neither being the consumer nor the consumed. To understand this phenomenon we can take a simple example from material science which says that energy only changes its form and is never consumed or depleted.

For instance, energy may change its form from, say, heat to light as in the electric bulb, from electrical to kinetic and heat as in the dynamo and the motor, and so on and so forth. But the basic entity known as 'energy' is the same in all its variations. Similarly, Brahm is the consumer as well as the consumed—meaning one thing is transferred from, say, pocket 'A' and placed in pocket 'B'. In both the cases, it does not mean that the principal thing itself is either depleted or destroyed or changed in any manner whatsoever. It only undergoes transformation but retains its intrinsic quality, virtue and identity.

Let us take another instance. If water is placed in two containers of different shapes and sizes—one, say, tubular and the other conical—it would still remain the same thing, it would still remain water, though its external form and shape are different.

Therefore we conclude that energy in any form would always be 'energy', and water in any form or container would still be 'water'.

Refer verse no. 29 below which explicitly explains this concept.]

28. 'That Lord (Vishnu) to whom four, two and five oblations are offered during fire sacrifices, let that Lord (Vishnu) be pleased with me.' (28).

29. The offering that is made to Brahm is in its self Brahm personified. This offering is offered to the sacred fire which is also Brahm personified, and the person making such an offering is also Brahm personified. Even the process of making the offerings is also Brahm from start to finish. [This is unique instance of the philosophy of Advaitya or non-

duality which espouses that ‘everything is Brahm’. The person who does the fire sacrifice, the things that are used for making offerings, and the sacred fire to which this offering is made, besides the actual deed of doing the fire sacrifice—all are nothing but Brahm in these apparently separate and distinct forms. In other words, even though the various units of creation might appear to be separated from one another and apparently have no relation with each other, but when analysed intelligently at the fundamental level of existence they all turn out to be one single unit known as ‘creation’, and since ‘creation’ is uniformly pervaded by Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, it follows that basically they are all Brahm in their individual forms.]

This is why those ascetics who have attained Samadhi or those who have reached the eclectic state of transcendental existence, there is only one non-dual Brahm to be attained. [This is because no matter which deity they worship and pay their respects to, they are actually worshipping and respecting Brahm in that form.] (29).

30. The Lord known as Hari (which is one of the names of Vishnu) shines or reveals himself in the form of omnipresent Consciousness or the various life-factors known as ‘Pran’ that are constantly and invariably present in all the organs of a creature’s body. Such a living creature who embodies Hari or Vishnu in this visible form is known as ‘Shar’.

The eclectic and mystical divine entity that entitles the creature to be known as Shar (i.e. a creature having life and conscious pulsating throughout his body which would have been dead and lifeless had it not been for this ‘consciousness’ that is present inside it) is called ‘Sharav’. Indeed, this Sharav is Brahm who bestows Moksha to the creature (i.e. Brahm provides emancipation and salvation, or liberation and deliverance to the creature’s soul, which is the latter’s ‘true self’). [The universal source of life known as ‘Consciousness’ that lends life to the otherwise lifeless gross body of a creature is known as Sharav. And since ‘Consciousness’ is another name for Brahm it follows that Sharav is no one else but the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm. The creature who is empowered by Brahm, the creature having ‘Consciousness’ in his body, is known as ‘Shar’.] (30).

31. Even the exalted Gods get trapped and deluded by the immense powers of the Lord’s maverick Maya (refer verse no. 24) which cause such delusions as Mamta (having love and endearment for anything in this world inspite of being aware of its grossness, perishability, impermanence and falsehood) etc.—say, who can ever describe even a part of the immense magnitude and great reach of the Lord’s enigmatic, esoteric and mysterious power known as Maya when it is so powerful and effective that it can even delude the Gods? (31).

32. Hari (one of the names of Lord Vishnu which literally means the one who ‘steals’ or eliminates all the torments as well as the evil effects of sins and other misdemeanours of the creature) is beyond (superior to) the transcendental Brahm (meaning the invisible all-pervading Lord), and Isha (literally the ‘Lord’ of all or ‘one who rules over the entire creation’) is beyond (superior to) Hari. Therefore, there is no one equal to or greater than Isha (32).

[Note—If we examine this verse carefully in the context of what has been said earlier about Shiva or Rudra as being the eliminator of all torments, as the supreme Lord who is beyond the reach and understanding of the mind and speech, who is the undisputed Lord God of the entire creation, we come to the conclusion that all the three names mentioned here, viz. Hari, Brahm and Isha, essentially refer to the same Divinity. This is the basic philosophy of Advaita Vedanta—the philosophy of non-duality, the doctrine that says that it is the same Truth called the universal and eternal cosmic Consciousness that has been given different names according to the various functions it performs and the forms it assumes in this creation. In essence the terms ‘Hari’ and ‘Sharav’ too mean the same thing even literally—because both these words mean ‘the one who eliminates or destroys’. In the case of Hari it means the destruction and elimination of the evils and sorrows of the devotee, and in the case of Sharav it means the one who had eliminated and destroyed the evil body of the Nrisingh. The soul of Nrisingh was being tormented by this most unconventional and horrible body as it was half man and half lion. So when this body was torn apart by Sharav, the soul found its freedom and peace from this tormenting existence.

The word ‘Isha’ means the ‘Lord’, and since it is usually applied to Lord Shiva, it follows that Shiva is the ‘Lord’ of creation. But the Upanishads have unequivocally and repeatedly stressed on the oneness of the ‘soul’ which is nothing but pure and truthful ‘consciousness’ though the latter might assume myriad forms. Therefore, all these names of Hari, Vishnu, Sharav, Rudra etc. apply to the same divine Being known as Brahm.

In other words, Hari, usually meaning Vishnu, Isha, usually meaning Shiva, and Brahm, usually meaning the Supreme Being, are all one and the same Divinity called by different names and playing different roles in creation.]

33-34. Shiva¹ is the only truthful, eternal and imperishable entity that remains infinitely constant, steady and unchanging, that is immutable and indivisible. Except Shiva everything else is un-truth, illusionary and false.

That is why besides the other exalted God known as Vishnu, the aspirant should meditate and contemplate only upon Lord Shiva who is the Lord (like Vishnu) who can help the aspirant to break free from all the fetters that shackle him down and prevent his liberation and deliverance from this ensnaring world.

We pay our sincere obeisance and the greatest of respect to Maheshwar (the great Lord God) who provides Mukti or liberation and deliverance from the formidable snare of this world which is very difficult to break free from, as well as is the Lord who devours everything in this world. [Refer verse nos. 5, 10, 17-18, 23, 26 and 30 in this context.] (33-34).

[Note—¹*Shiva*— This word *Shiva* refers to the third God of the Trinity, and the one who has been assigned the task of bringing the world to an end. The word itself briefly means the eclectic, glorious and beautiful virtues of truthfulness, purity, auspiciousness, wisdom, enlightenment, erudition, sagacity, blissfulness, dispassion, detachment, holiness and divinity. These are accompanied by a high degree of peace, tranquility, serenity and their attendant happiness, joy and bliss. Since ‘truthfulness and auspiciousness’ are qualities that are beautiful, this word also means something that is beautiful and beyond reproach.

Various names of Lord Shiva—Lord Shiva is considered as the most exalted and wisest amongst the Gods, and is therefore honoured with the epithet ‘Maha Dev’ or the Great God, and ‘Maheshwar’ or the Great Ishwar as he is regarded as the supreme Lord

of the entire creation. [Refer Atharva Veda's Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 34, Atharvashir Upanishad, Kandika 4; Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 1.]

This is why he is also called 'Ishan'. [Refer Atharvashir Upanishad, Kandika 4.]

As the concluder of creation he is known as 'Rudra' because then he has to assume a ruthless and angry form. [Refer Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 10.]

In his form as the liberator of the soul of the creature by destroying the latter's gross external body and freeing the soul, he is known as Sharav. Shiva had assumed this form to liberate Lord Vishnu from the horrible body of Nrisingh (half man and half lion). [Refer Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 6-8.]

He is known as Trinetrum or Trayambak as he has three eyes. [Refer (i) Atharva Veda = Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 6; and Canto 2, paragraph no. 21; Sharav Upanishad, verse nos. 10, 14; Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4; (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 93.]

He is called Pashupati because he is the Lord of lowly creatures with animal-like instincts. [Refer References: (i) Atharva Veda = Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 8; Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 14. (ii) Sam Veda = Jabalu-panishad, verse nos. 11-18.]

One of his names is Kaamaari because the Lord had reduced the God of passions, known as Kamdeo-cupid, to ashes. [Refer Sharav Upanishad, verse no. 15.]

He is known as Neelkanth because he had drunk the horrible poison called Halaahal which emerged as a scorching froth at the time of churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit or the ambrosia of life and eternity. [Refer Sharav Upanishad, verse nos. 11, 16.]

He is known as Shambhu as he is the one who remains uniform, unruffled and calm even under adverse situations. Shambhu is one who exists or is established in an enlightened state of highest consciousness (i.e. is 'Bhu') that is marked by perfect self control, complete neutrality, absolute tranquility, serenity, peacefulness and blissfulness (i.e. is 'Sham'). [Refer Atharvashikha Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Kandika 3.]

The *Maho-panishad* of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 describes that Shiva was born from the forehead of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, invisible and all-inclusive gross body of Brahm, the Supreme Being.

The *Panch Brahm Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 41 espouses that Shiva lives in the heart of the creature as an embodiment of 'Sat-Chit-Anand', i.e. as his Atma—"Shiva, as Sat-Chit-Anand personified, always lives in the heart. He is a constant witness of all that is happening. That is why the heart is regarded as the doorway to liberation and deliverance from the traps that have been laid out by this delusory and cunning world of artificiality to ensnare the creature in its tentacles."

The *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition was preached by Lord Shiva himself to sage Jabal Bhusund, and it highlights the fact that Lord Shiva is no ordinary God, or even a senior one being a member of the Trinity of Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder, but is the supreme transcendental Brahm himself personified. Shiva is the Supreme Being himself. Refer Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1; Canto 2, paragraph no. 3, 6-8.

The *Atharvashikha Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 3 declares that 'Shambhu', one of the many epithets of Lord Shiva, is the highest deity to be worshipped and adored, and he represents the fifth state of consciousness that is called the Turiyateet, and to the fourth aspect of the ethereal word OM. This Shambhu or Shiva is Brahm in its best and most pristine form.

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 92-94 says that Lord Shiva, in his form as Rudra, is the patron deity and personification of the

fire element, and it is no wonder then that he is surrounded by ‘fire-spitting’ serpents as a symbolism of this fact. In this Upanishad’s verse nos. 98-102 it is asserted that Shiva is the patron deity and personification of the sky element.

The *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 8, 10, 13, 15 and 19 affirms that Shiva is invariably wrapped by serpents.

The *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes Lord Shiva as the south-facing Lord and elaborately elucidates the metaphysical significance of this from.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Brahman 4, verse no. 29 says that the Lord with three eyes (Trinetrum) is the bearer of this world having three aspects or the one who is the foundation upon which all the three Gunas such as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna rest (Trigunadhaaram) and is the one from whom the Trinity Gods (i.e. the creator Brahma, the sustainer Vishnu, and the concluder Rudra) are born. This Lord is none other than Lord Maheshwar, the great Ishwar or Lord of creation who is also known as Shiva, Ishan, Isha etc. This Lord is synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm. This fact is endorsed Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 32, and in *Dakshin Murti* or *Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad*.

As the deity of the fire element, he is said to have ‘three eyes’ (Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 93), and as the deity of the sky element he is depicted as having a moon tucked in his lock of hairs, besides having five mouths, ten arms and three eyes (Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 100). Now let us see their significance.

The *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 4/42 says that it is Lord Ram who has manifested as ‘Maheshwar’, the great God. Since this term is conventionally applied to Lord Shiva, it follows that Shiva is actually Lord Ram in this form. Its verse no. 4/43 clearly endorses this view when it says that Lord Ram has manifested himself as Mahadev—the great God. This term ‘Mahadev’ is also conventionally used for Lord Shiva.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, paragraph no. 8 describes the great Mantra of Lord Shiva which gives the worshipper the stature equivalent to Lord Shiva.

The significance of the *moon, the five heads and the ten arms*—

Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a *crescent moon* on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolising the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire creation consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is called ‘one Pada’ or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The moon present on Shiva’s forehead also stands for the various eclectic qualities called Kalaas that he possesses and which adorn him like the moon. Symbolically, the devotee is advised to follow the example of his chosen deity Lord Shiva and note the symbolism of the Moon on his head. These eclectic qualities should be as prominent as the moon on the head of Shiva and they should form an integral part of the character of the devotee if he wishes to place himself in the position of being called a sincere follower and worshipper of Lord Shiva. Now let us have a glimpse of these *Kalaas*. They are the various eclectic qualities or attributes that an exalted man should possess.

The *five heads* of Shiva stand for the ‘Panch Vyom’ or the five forms that the sky element is said to have. According to Vedanta, the concept of the *sky* or ‘Akash’ has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are *five* subtle skies

representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or *Koshas* present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intellectual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Refer—Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

The *ten arms* of Shiva stand for the ten forms of the subtle sky element. They are the following—(1) Ghatakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash—the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash—the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash—the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash—the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the inter-galactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called 'Swarga' which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

The *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 100 says that Lord Shiva is most pure and immaculate, and as clear and clean as pure crystal. He has a crescent moon tucked in the lock of hairs on his head. He has five mouths, is very sober, gentle and pleasant, has ten arms and three eyes.

The significance of the *serpents* wrapped around his body—The coiled serpents around his body indicate the fact that he constantly reminds himself of imminent death because serpents are very poisonous and symbolise immediate death. This helps him to remain focused on his spiritual aim of self-realisation instead of being attracted by the material charms of this material world of sense objects and getting deluded by them. The serpents also signify that Shiva is the Lord of death; he is death personified. Since he is able to wrap the serpents around his body and they cannot harm him, it indicates the fact that he has conquered death. That is why he is called 'Mrityunjay', the conqueror of death.

Again, the coiled serpents represent the Kundalini, the coiled subtle energy center at the base of the spine which when activated can entitle the spiritual aspirant to experience a burst of stupendous spiritual energy which provides him a glimpse of his own divine powers as well as the powers of the cosmic Consciousness present inside his bosom as his Atma. This Kundalini is activated by doing numerous Yoga exercises as described in the Upanishads on the subject of Yoga.

The coiled serpents may also represent cycles of time in the macrocosm and the basic energy of life in the microcosm in the form of sexual energy.

These reptiles are very ferocious, dangerous, poisonous, and a symbol of male potency. The symbolism is that Shiva is a very potent God who can be extremely ruthless and unforgiving towards sinful creatures. He has exercised extreme self control and has 'girdled' or readied himself in preparation for enduring the greatest of hardships and sufferance for self-realisation as well as to provide the world with liberation and deliverance. The serpents warn his enemies not to fool around with him. That is also why he has fire in one of his hands. This fire signifies his ability to reduce to ashes the entire physical world consisting of falsehood and sins as well as eliminate all impurities, imperfections, faults and shortcomings that cripple the creature's spiritual well being.

The symbolism and significance of the *three eyes of Shiva* have been explained above as a note appended to verse no. 10 of the present Upanishad.]

35-35 ½. This great Shastra (scripture) received by sage Pippalaad (from Brahma) should not be given (divulged, revealed, preached or taught) to unworthy or incompetent subjects or aspirants.

[Who are such unworthy or incompetent people? This is being answered now.] It should not be given to those people who are 'Nastik' (heretics, atheist, unbelievers and sceptics), 'Kritaghna' (ungrateful and thankless), 'Durvritti' (those who have evil tendencies and pervert nature; those who are unscrupulous and inclined to malice and sinful acts), 'Duratma' (those who are sinful, pervert, corrupt and evil) [35], 'Dhambha' (those who are deceitful, impostors, boastful, arrogant, ostentatious, hypocrite, full of vanity), 'Nrishansa' (merciless, cruel and lack compassion), 'Shath' (wicked, crafty, deceitful, cunning as well as stupid and foolish), 'Anrit Bhaasan' (speaking lie and being dishonest in one's speech). [35 ½] (35-35 ½).

36-37. On the contrary it should be given (divulged, revealed, preached or taught) to those people who have the following auspicious virtues in them—'Suvrata' (those who follow auspicious code of conduct and are scrupulous in their thoughts and behaviour), 'Subhakta' (are devoted and committed), 'Suvritti' (those who have auspicious and noble aspirations, volitions, temperament and nature), 'Sushil' (are amiable, affable, modest, polite, courteous, suave, sober, obliging, cordial, soft spoken, well mannered, cultured and civilised) [36],

'Guru Bhakta' (devoted to one's moral preceptor, teacher and guide), 'Daanta' (who is self-restrained and self-regulated), 'Shaanta' (peaceful, tranquil, composed, unruffled, calm, poised and serene), 'Riju Chetas' (who is conscientious, is scrupulous, has auspicious and righteous tendency of the mind and intellect), 'Shiv Bhakta' (an ardent devotee of Lord Shiva), 'Datahya' (of a charitable disposition), 'Brahm Karmi' (is inclined to do auspicious, righteous, noble and proper deeds selflessly as a means of serving the Lord known as Brahm; treating each deed and action as Brahm in that form). [37] (36-37).

38. Only such people who are called 'Suvrata' (i.e. who strictly observe the above principles) and 'Swa-Bhakta' (are true devotees of Lord Shiva as well as the Lord who resides in their own bosom as their 'true self'—a reference to the pure consciousness representing the supreme Brahm) are indeed eligible and competent to be given (divulged, revealed, preached or taught) this great scripture.

Oh the most exalted Brahmin! Otherwise, one should protect this sacred scripture from falling into the hands of unscrupulous and incompetent persons (38).

39. [This verse outlines the benefits of studying this Upanishad.]

A wise and learned person who himself reads and studies this great scripture revealed to sage Pippalaad, or makes others hear it by preaching or teaching it to them—verily, he is freed from the snare of the never-ending cycle of birth and death.

A person who comes to learn and understand its esoteric meaning is able to access Amrit (the elixir of eternity and bliss) as well as find freedom from having to reside in a mother's womb (i.e. having to take a birth again).

A person who regularly reads and studies it is exonerated from the horrendous effects of such grave sins as stealing gold, drinking wine, killing of a Brahmin or any other creature, or being lustful towards the wife of one's Guru (moral preceptor). Instead, he gets the auspicious rewards of having studied all the Vedas. Such a person is rid of small and big sins and their consequences, and becomes cleansed and purified¹.

Hence, a spiritually reformed person is deemed be one who has surrendered himself to the eternal and supreme Lord of creation, and therefore becomes eligible for liberation and deliverance.

He becomes permanently endeared to Lord Shiva, and finds his ultimate rest with Shiva. He does not have to take a birth again. It is because he becomes one with and inseparable from Brahm, the Supreme Being, the cosmic Consciousness.

This is how Brahma the creator preached this great Upanishad (to sage Pippalaad) (39).

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that this way of pardoning of all sins is a standard method in almost all the Upanishads. Their intent is not to condone sinful acts by easily forgiving the sinner by merely reading this or that scripture, but to highlight the grand and majestic mystical potentials and powers of the scripture in question. Besides this, since every human can err, the scriptures show him the path of redemption if he is really interested and sincere for it. All sinners must be given a chance at reforming themselves, and this is the real intent of this blanket pardoning. Further, if a man is sincere and honest regarding his desire to repent and atone for his past sins and demeanours, and once he is given a chance and shown the path to do so, who in his right mind would revert back to his bad old ways and not reform or amend himself in the hope of leading a more fruitful and respectable life marked by happiness and peace.

If he does not reform himself and become a changed man even after reading and studying the scriptures, then surely such a man does not deserve any leniency and pardon and so the scripture wouldn't forgive him! The benevolence shown by the scriptures should not be misconstrued as them condoning sins and vices or granting a blanket reprieve even against the most horrible of sins just by touching them or reading them. Even to think in these terms is highly incredulous, incongruous and insanity.

Their forgiveness is meant for those who sincerely wish to atone for their sinful past and lead a reformed life. This pardon is not for them who wish to exploit the magnanimity of the scriptures to hide behind them to escape punishment by claiming that now since they have read such and such Upanishad which grants pardon they ought to be forgiven from being punished, only to revert to their bad old ways once pardoned. Even in modern society first time offenders are given a chance at reformation and change, but any such law granting reprieve should not be misused. Habitual offenders deserve no mercy whatsoever.

This fact has been stressed in a number of Upanishads of the Atharva Veda tradition. For instance—Mahavakya Upanishad, verse no. 12; Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 10; Ganapati Upanishad, verse no. 17; Devi Upanishad, verse no. 32; Hayagriva Upanishad, verse no. 13; Dattatreya Upanishad, Section 3, stanza 4.]

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3.7 Atharva Veda tradition's Pashupat Brahm Upanishad—

This is a revealed Upanishad as it was first preached by the creator Brahma himself to sage Valmiki. It is sub-divided into two parts—the first is known as Purva Kanda, and the second as Uttar Kanda. It primarily deals with the great metaphysical concepts of Brahm, the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation, and uses the metaphor of Hans, the divine Swan that is used as a symbol of high purity and wisdom, to establish that Brahm and the pure conscious Atma residing as the 'true self' in the inner-being of all living creatures are the same divine entities. Just like the divine Mantra OM which is dedicated to Brahm and is synonymous with the latter as it is deemed to be an all-pervading cosmic sound manifestation of Brahm, the word Hans, when used as a Mantra, also implies both the Atma as well as the Brahm. 'Hans' is a broad term that is used as a metaphor for all that is wise, divine, holy, pure, immaculate, uncorrupt, auspicious and noble, qualities that apply to both the Brahm and the Atma.

The Upanishad derives its name from the fact that Brahm is known as 'Pashupati' (Kanda 1, verse no. 32) because Brahm, manifested in the form of the eclectic virtues of wisdom, conscience, intelligence, virtuousness, righteousness, nobility, propriety and auspiciousness, as well as in right deed, conduct and thought, helps a man overcome, vanquish and control the natural animal-like savage instincts in a living being. It follows that anyone who has learnt to exercise exemplary control over his sense organs and their natural urges and instincts is a personification of Brahm. Since Brahm is represented by the Atma as well as by its symbol known as Pranav or OM, it follows that by taking the aid of the Atma or the word Mantra OM one can directly access Brahm.

Attainment of Brahm-hood is therefore directly related to the realisation of the Atma which is a microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic divinity known as Brahm. This Atma is the cosmic Consciousness that resides in the body of the individual creature and forms his true self. The word OM acts as a catalyst in the process of establishing a unity between this Atma and its principal form Brahm. Therefore, attainment of self-realisation and Brahm-hood are synonymous with each other and go hand in hand; they are marked by the grand virtues of wisdom, enlightenment and knowledge of the 'truth'. These virtues free the spiritual aspirant from the fetters of ignorance (Agyan) that had cast a thick veil of delusions (Maya) around him that acts as an abominable and foreboding obstacle in the path of his Mukti (which means his spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation).

The Upanishad emphasizes and establishes the fact that the best form of religious sacrifice as well as worship is that which is done internally as opposed to the external rituals and formalities. It goes on to elucidate that Brahm, the Supreme Being and the Lord of creation, is to be found in the inner-self of the worshipper and nowhere outside. It points out that all external paraphernalia of religion only have a symbolic value, and in

this context it cites the instance of the sacred thread, the two great fire sacrifices known as the Vajpaye Yagya and the Ashwamedh Yagya, the observation of Sandhya which means the offering of prayers three times a day, the bird Hans, the Mantra OM employed during worship, and so on. True knowledge of Brahm that is rich in wisdom and a source of one's spiritual enlightenment and freedom is the Sutra (formula or thread) that links the Atma (i.e. the 'self') of the creature to the supreme Brahm (i.e. the Supreme Being and the supreme Self), and paves the way for his final Mukti. Then it also says that each unit of creation, including the great Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder, are only 'images' of Brahm in as much as they depict one or the other of the countless glories and virtues of Brahm, but they are *not* Brahm in the complete sense (verse no. 10). This Kanda outlines the method of meditating upon Brahm with the help of aids such as Hans and Pranav. These grand topics are covered in Kanda (Canto) 1.

The ideas expressed in the first Kanda are further elaborated in Kanda 2 which outlines how the supreme Brahm has a paradoxical nature in the sense that while the whole creation is its image, is regulated and empowered by it from within, Brahm still is absolutely different from any of its images and things that it controls and empowers. During the course of enumerating the glories and virtues of Brahm, this Kanda also outlines the eclectic characters and way of thinking a Brahm-realised and enlightened person.

The knowledge of Brahm is the greatest spiritual asset that any wise and erudite person would strive to acquire because it leads to eternal contentedness and extreme spiritual bliss.

Since this world is a creation of Maya (delusions), it has no pith and substance, and to pursue it is like voluntarily falling in a dark pit. Brahm-realisation on the other hand helps one to finally break free from the endless cycle of birth and death by attaining emancipation and salvation.

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Purva Kand/Canto 1

1. Once upon a time, the self-born creator Brahma had a desire to initiate the process of creation and create the subjects or creatures that would inhabit or populate the would-be creation.

In this process, he created Lord Kameshwar (Lord Shiva who is regarded as the Lord who rules over, and therefore controls, all worldly passions and desires) and Vaisrawan (so-called as he is the son of Vaishrava, the creator of the world; he is also known as Kuber, the treasurer of Gods) (1).

2. Vaisrawan who was the son of the creator Brahm and was also known as sage Vaalkhilya¹ asked his father—'Oh Lord! What is the knowledge of this world (or how can one know what this world is)? Who are the patron Gods or deities of the two extreme states of existence of consciousness known as the Jagrat (waking state) and Turiya (transcendental state)? Who controls this world (or who is the Authority that regulates

everything in this creation)? What is the proof of the existence of Kaal (various aspects of time or phases of life; the end of everything that has come into existence)? By whose command and on whose strength do the moon and the sun rise and shine? Who or which is that Authority whose glories and virtues are as infinite, eternal, vast and immortal as the sky?

I wish to hear the answers to all these questions from you. So please be kind to elaborate upon them. No one else except you has knowledge of the answers of these questions. Therefore, oh Brahmin, please enlighten me about them.’ (2).

[Note—¹*Vaalkhilya*—He was the head of a family of sages born from Kratu, the father, and Kriyadevi, the mother. There are said to be sixty-thousand *Vaalkhilyas* who are supposed to be siblings. They were of the size of a thumb. Once they had helped sage Kashyap perform his fire sacrifice successfully, but became tired. When Indra, the king of Gods, saw them weary, he laughed at them, thereby incurring their wrath who cursed him that he would be punished for his impertinence and arrogance by Garud, the legendary vehicle of Lord Vishnu.]

3. The Swayambhu (self-born) Brahma (the creator) replied—‘The *Maatrika Vidya*¹ is the one that has created the entire world. [It is the knowledge that deals with the intricacies and finer subtle details of the process of creation, details that are esoteric and mysterious. It would answer your question ‘How was this creation created?’]’ (3).

[Note—¹The *Maatrika Vidya* is the esoteric and secret knowledge of creation that deals with the Shakti or the dynamic powers of the Supreme Being known as Brahm that first stirs the neutral and calm primordial cosmic gel by injecting in it the first spark of life, which in turn sets off a chain reaction that culminates in the form of the creation as it is known now. The word ‘*Maatrika*’ literally means a small mother. Since the process of creation is so complex that it required a number of complicated processes taking place simultaneously, with each individual element and each single dynamic source of energy playing its crucial role in the composite phenomenon of creation, these were called ‘*Maatrikas*’ because they were all like little mothers who had got together and used their combined energy, resources and abilities to create or conceive a cosmic embryo, nourish it, and allow it to develop to maturity so that the creation could be revealed in the way it finally did. They conceived and harboured this creation in their collective womb, and had nourished and sustained it till the time it was born in the matured form as we know it today.

In modern science we know that any finished product requires a chain of steps to be meticulously undertaken before it is finally produced. The science of organic chemistry teaches us that numerous chemical products are created by tweaking the basic molecular structure of various elements in association with the ubiquitous carbon atom that is at the central core of all organic formulas.

Similarly, the creation of this universe was not an isolated event, but it required countless subtler steps undertaken in a systematic form that worked together towards one goal, and that goal was the revelation of this creation. Many small steps and countless numbers of subtle factors that were insignificant in themselves, but assumed great importance as part of the cosmic mosaic of creation, contributed to the creation of this world. Each of these factors and elements are the *Maatrikas* of this creation. This world is a ‘creation’ precisely for this reason—it was moulded from primary ingredients that had no significant value of their own, but when they were subjected to many adjustments and experimentations they produced a ‘world’ that is rich in dynamism and energy, a world that has no resemblance to any of these primary ingredients. Each step was equally

important and equally significant, because one miss-step would have caused the entire process to malfunction and come to a standstill.

Each of these 'steps' are metaphorically cited as the various 'Maatrikas' in the field of metaphysical interpretation of this celestial phenomenon. Here, the word Maatrika is related to the Mantras which are divine formulas used in meditation and contemplation, and hence implies the hidden energy and dynamism of the letters of the Mantra which give it its inherent stupendous powers, potentials and authority as well as its holiness, divinity and sanctity.

The process of creation involved cosmic efforts by the creator who is said to have performed a cosmic fire sacrifice in order to initiate this process, and had obviously employed certain Mantras, as any fire sacrifice needs the use of Mantras for its proper sanctified process. As would be seen in due course, the Mantra employed by Brahma was Hans that is a synonym Mantra for Pranav or OM. The inherent dynamism and energy of this Mantra is contained in its syllables or letters, and it is this dynamism and energy that not only initiated the process of creation but also sustained it during its period of development and growth that culminated in the birth of the visible creation.

In brief therefore, the 'Maatrika Vidya' is the esoteric knowledge (science) which pertains to the individual letters or syllables of any given Mantra dedicated to any given deity who represents one or the other aspect or facet of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. The Maatrika Vidya deals with the mystical power, energy, authority and strength, i.e. the dynamism that is inherent in any given Mantra, but which is based on the individual units (i.e. the individual letters or syllables) of the Mantra. That is, if one knows what the individual units of a Mantra are, then he can correctly predict the power and abilities that not only this Mantra possesses but also of the deity that this Mantra represents.

For instance, it is well established that the Mantra 'OM' stands for Brahm. Therefore, the Maatrika Vidya of OM would be a comprehensive understanding of its finer sound components and their alphabetical counterparts, along with their spiritual significance and metaphysical import, as well as the combined astounding spiritual powers, dynamism and energy that they incorporate in themselves when they form the Mantra known as 'OM'.

References: (i) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 62-63; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 21-22. (ii) Atharva Veda = Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 12 (which says that the first outer ring, called the Chakra, of the worship instrument of Goddess Tripura has eight Matrikaas enshrined in it).]

4. This Vidya known as Maatrika Vidya has two forms—one with two syllables or letters (i.e. the Mantra 'Hans'¹), and the other with three syllables or letters (i.e. the Mantra 'OM'² or Pranav). In fact, both these two forms of the Maatrika Vidya are the same. It also has another eclectic but esoteric form or derivation or variation having four letters or syllables³ (4).

[Note—¹The *two letters of Hans* are 'Han' and 'Sa'. This Mantra has been elaborately described in a number of Upanishads. Refer References for the term 'Hans' (a divine Swan)—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda—Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 6; Canto 6, verse no. 15; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 3-4; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse nos. 24, 61-65; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 16, 20-28, 34, 60-64, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132, Canto 2, verse nos. 9-11, Canto 6, verse no. 20, 35-36, 53-54; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 99. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Hansopanishad is exclusively dedicated to explain the concept of the pure conscious Atma by way of using the metaphor of a Hans. (c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani

Upanishad, verse no. 31-35, 82-83, 93. (d) Atharva Veda—Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 4

²The *three letters of OM* are 'A', 'U' and 'M'.

³The *four letters of OM* are 'A', 'O', 'U' and 'M'.

The profound metaphysical and spiritual importance and significance of OM has been succinctly summarised in the following Upanishads. They are:--

(a) Rig Veda—Naad Bindu Upanishad.

(b) Krishna Yajur Veda—Taittiriya Upanishad, Valli (Canto) 1, Anuvak (sub-canto) 8; Amrit Naad Upanishad, verse no. 2, 4, 24-25, 31-32; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 2, 9-18 (which narrates how each letter of OM stands for different aspects of creation), 37, 102; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 1, 6; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 136-139; Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 2-12, 69-71 ½ which narrates how each letter of OM stands for different aspects of creation; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11—1.34, and Canto 5, verse no. 70; Shukar Rahasya Upanishad, verse no. 20 describes how OM is used for the purpose of ritualistic worship according to the Tantra philosophy involving Anga Nyas, Shandanga Nyas etc.; Akchu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 42-43 ½ describe how the three states of existence (waking, dreaming and deep sleep) and the three types of bodies (gross, subtle and causal) came into existence as manifestations of the three letters A, U and M of the word OM; Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse no. 38.

(b) Shukla Yajur Veda—Taarsar Upanishad, Canto 2, and Canto 3, verse nos. 1-7; Hans Upanishad, verse nos. 6-17.

(c) Sam Veda—Yogchudamani Upanishad verse no. 74-81, 85-88; Pranavo Panishad which has only 13 verses dedicated to OM.

(d) Atharva Veda—Ram Tapiniopanishad, canto 3, verse no.5-9; Prashna Upanishad, full Canto 5; Mundak Upanishad, Canto 2, section 2, verse no. 4,6; Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 8-12; Atharvashikha; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 2, 5; Canto 4, verse no. 3; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse nos. 2-8; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 6, verse nos. 3-4.]

5. I, the creator Brahma, am the only Lord of the three worlds [That is, I am the sustainer, nourisher and protector of the three worlds consisting of the terrestrial realm, the heavens, and the nether world.] (5).

[Note—Here the pronoun 'I' that the creator Brahma uses actually is meant to imply the Supreme Being known as Brahm who has manifested or revealed himself in the form of the creator Brahma. In fact, the very name of the creator, i.e. 'Brahma', is derived from the root 'Brahm', and it means the creative form of the Supreme Being. In other words, when Brahm, the Supreme Being, decided to create this world, he took the form of Brahma. Therefore, Brahma, the great and grand forefather of creation, is actually Brahm involved in the process of creation himself.

Being a direct and the first revelation of Brahm, the Supreme Being, before the initiation of creation which necessitated the involvement of Maya (delusions), the creator known as Brahma is regarded as the wisest and the enlightened One. That is why the primary scriptures known as the Vedas are his produce.

Later on, as the process of creation commenced and moved ahead, the need was felt for Maya because unadulterated Truth could not be made to appear in more than one form, and to make the world it was necessary to have wide variations of forms, qualities and features. So, either the creator could have abandoned the entire process of creation by deciding to maintain the Truth and shun all falsehood altogether, or to overlook this stumbling block and create delusions of reality if he actually wanted to give shape to his

dream project of creation. Hence, the creator willingly set aside the real Truth and created its image in the form of an imaginary 'truth' that was so perfect that it seemed to be a real image of the Truth. But in reality the product was a complete 'falsehood' for the very simple reason that it was 'created' and not pre-existing.

This declaration of Brahma that 'I am the creator' is not boastful or wrong really. This is because he is the wise One and also the most enlightened One. His statement is reminiscent of what a self-realised and wise spiritual aspirant declares, and which is also endorsed by the Upanishads. He asserts 'I am Brahm; I am Brahm personified'—a declaration that is regarded as one of the many great sayings or the Maha Vakyas of the Vedas. Here, the pronoun 'I' does not mean the physical body of the person making this statement, but refers to his Atma which is his real and truthful 'self'. It is not at all a boastful and arrogant statement but one that comes spontaneously from the inner-self of a wise and honest man. This Atma is an image of Brahm that resides in the body. The individual is an image and a microcosm of the entire creation—with his gross body representing the visible aspect of creation and his Atma representing Brahm that lives in this world as its soul and essence.

Therefore, when the creator Brahma says that 'I have created this world', he is not being untruthful or boastful, but is making an honest declaration as he knows who his 'true self' is.

Therefore also he is indeed 'the only Lord of the entire world'—because he is the Supreme Being himself personified in his form.]

6. All phases of time and eras are under my control and command. [Like in the previous verse and in the following verses also, the pronouns 'my' or 'me' refer to the Supreme Being carrying out the divine work of creating the various components of creation.] (6).

7. It is me who has created and set out a pattern for the day and the night (7).

8. The Tej (light, illumination and dynamism) that is inherently present in the sun, the moon, all the stars and constellations are my glories on display (8).

9. The sky (which is incorruptible, vast, infinite, eternal, all-pervading and all-encompassing) is my subtle but macrocosmic form. The three Gunas (i.e. the subtle qualities that are inherent in all living beings in this creation, and which decide the character traits and the personality of each single individual in creation; the qualities known as Sata, Raja and Tama)¹, which are also called the three Shaktis (dynamic powers), along with the Maya (the power of creating delusions)² are also my glories and dynamism revealed in these forms.

[In other words, whatever character traits and virtues that are displayed by all the living beings in this creation are reflections of the astoundingly varying forms that the cosmic authority, the power, the energy and the dynamism of the supreme Brahm can take. It also implies that the term Brahm has a holistic import as it incorporates the extremes of the good as well as the bad, and all that lies in between. There is no surprise in it simply because it conforms to the philosophy that says that there is nothing in this creation that is not Brahm. Hence, if goodness is Brahm, then the bad as well as the mediocre are also Brahm! This is why Brahm defies all definitions and parameters, and is the greatest paradox of creation. Brahm is the circumference of creation beyond which there is nothing.] (9).

[Note—¹The *three Gunas* are the basic three qualities that determine the character of all living beings in creation. They combine in different ratios to impart an individual with his unique personality and character traits. The creator needed these Gunas to give individuality to all the creatures of his creation.

Briefly, these three Gunas are the following—(a) The *Sata Guna* is the best of the three qualities present in any creature. It is a positive quality and is marked by a propensity for following the path of nobility, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, virtuousness, holiness and righteousness. Creatures that have a predominance of *Sata Guna* are inclined to do selfless service, be benevolent, merciful, kind and gracious, have coolness of head and a rationale and balanced mind, be contented, have humility and piety etc. Such creatures are devoted to good values in life and have a desire to acquire knowledge that would help them reach higher spiritual goals in life.

This *Sata Guna* is marked by high standards of ethical and moral existence that makes the bearer of such qualities highly respected in society. Such people have a spiritual dimension to their personality. This quality is spiritually uplifting and gives a divine halo to those who possess it and practice it.

The *Vasanas* that have the *Sata Guna* or quality dominant in them are like a veil covering the lamp or like a smoke covering the fire. A slight breeze will remove this smoke. Similarly a little bit of prayer and meditation will remove the *Satwic* desires; its removal requires the least effort.

(b) The second quality is the *Raja Guna* and it makes a man more attracted to this material world and its charms, and less spiritually inclined. The *Raja Guna* is the medium quality marked by a greater percentage of worldly passions, desires and attachments and their natural offshoots in a creature. It makes a creature inclined towards the material things of the gross world and their enjoyments, towards creation of wealth, its enhancement and protection, and generally having a desire for growth, development and expansion etc. It covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, a stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, a desire to acquire, retain and develop such acquisitions even to the detriment of one's long term spiritual welfare and even if such actions cause pain to others. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the *Satwic* qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being.

The *Vasanas* that have the *Rajasic Guna* or quality dominant in them can be compared to dust on a mirror. In this case some dusting and rubbing is needed to clean the mirror; a greater effort is needed as compared to the case with *Satwic* quality.

(c) The third quality is called the *Tama Guna* and is the meanest and the basest of the three Gunas. It is a demeaning quality in a creature that leads to his downfall and perpetual entanglement with things that are considered improper and unethical. It creates an inclination for committing all sorts of sins, misdeeds and demeanours. It leads the creature towards negativity and inspires him to acquire negative qualities such as various vices, evils, sins, perversions etc. It makes him inclined to be greedy, rapacious, haughty, arrogant, lustful, intoxicated, vile and wild to the extreme. Such a creature with a predominance of *Tama Guna* has utter disregard for propriety, noble virtues and ethics, for righteousness and morality.

In brief, it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, and leads to such behaviour which is utterly immoral, denigrating and depraved, marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness. It therefore leads to his downfall, ignominy and ruin as well as ignorance, delusions, gloom, inertia, anger, frustration etc.

The Tamsic Guna or quality is like the embryonic membrane that covers the foetus in the womb. They cannot be removed easily and require great diligence, effort, persistence, dedication and careful handling requiring time and patience. It is the basest and the lowliest of the three characteristics, and the worst type to possess.

These three Gunas are called ‘Shaktis’ because they are powerful enough to determine the way the world behaves and thinks; they are the dynamic aspect of creation that control all characters and facets of personality of all the creatures of this creation. Being responsible for a creature’s thought processes and how he acts and behaves, these Gunas even have a say on his future and destiny. These Gunas are the powerful and forceful drivers that determine where the destiny of the world is headed.

The *Naradparivrajak Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 3, verse no. 77, says that these three Gunas are the basic Dhatus (elements) in creation.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Brahman 3, verse no. 1 says that all the three Gunas depend upon the level of one’s Vidya or his level of wisdom, knowledge, erudition and enlightenment.

The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 116 elucidates how these three Gunas are like the three Granthis (knots) of the body as far as the ascetic is concerned.

The *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 4, verse no. 10 describes the relationship between Prakriti, Maya and Gunas in a very succinct manner.

How the three Gunas *affect the man’s character* have been very precisely and expressly narrated in *Shaarirako-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda in its verse nos. 7-13.

How the three Gunas *were used by Brahm to create this world* has been beautifully described in *Paingalo-panishad*, 1/7 and 2/3. Canto 2, verse no. 3 describes how Sata and Raja were used, while Canto 1, verse no. 7 narrates the use of Tama.

The *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 6, verse no. 16, describes how the supreme Brahm was the creator of all the three Gunas.

The concept of *Gunas affecting the Atma* has been elaborately dealt with in various Upanishads, for example the *Maitrayanyu Upanishad*, 1/11, 2/5, 3/5, etc. of the Sam Veda tradition.

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, verse no. 2 describes how the three Gunas were used by the supreme Creator to create this world.

Colour of the Gunas—Upanishads symbolically refer to the *three primary colours* when they describe these *three basic qualities* in the creature. They are white for the Sata Guna, red for the Raja Guna, and black for the Tama Guna. Refer—*Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, 4/5; and *Paingalo-panishad* 1/3. The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 9-13 describes these Gunas has having the following colours while it analyses the various components of the Manta OM. The colours are grey or white for the Sata Guna, yellow for Raja Guna, and dark for the Tama Guna.

The *Chandogya Upanishad*, 3/5/4-3/9 and 6/3-4 of the Sam Veda uses these three colours to describe the different types of characters called Sata, Raja and Tama defining the three basic types of creatures and their individual personality traits and temperaments that exist in this creation.

The *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 9-13 describes the colours of the Gunas as follows—“The first letter ‘A’ is symbolically of a yellow colour and represents the predominance of the ‘Raja Guna’ in this creation. The second letter ‘U’ is symbolically of a white or grey hue and represents the predominance of ‘Sata Guna’ in this creation. Finally, the third letter ‘M’ is symbolically of a dark colour and represents the predominance of the ‘Tama Guna’ in predominance.”

The *Paingal Upanishad*, 1/3-9 of the Shukla Yajur Veda clearly states that these three colours were the ones with which Nature representing creation was born and how

the supreme creator had subtly entered the entire creation to be uniformly present in its very minutest of corner.

In Tantra texts, these three Gunas are treated as the three Granthis or knots. The *Yogshikha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda is one such. In its Canto 1, verse no. 116 it describes how the three inherent Gunas (qualities) of Sata, Raja and Tama that are naturally present in all the creatures are likened to knots or Granthis that create obstacles in his spiritual progress and the shine of his consciousness to come to the fore. Verse no. 117 describes the benefits of this achievement.

²*Maya*—The term broadly means ‘delusions’ or the situation which creates an illusion of reality which is devoid of truth and matter.

It is a manifestation of Brahma in the sense that it reflects his dynamism and glories to create wonders out of nothing and real-life illusions that resemble the truth so much that it is hard to distinguish the false from the truth.

Maya is also said to be of *three types*, called the ‘Triguna Maya’, because of the dominance of one or the other of the above three Gunas in any given situation. Thus, when the Maya is dominated by the Sata Guna, it is called ‘Sata Guni Maya’; when it is dominated by the Raja Guna, it is called ‘Raja Guni Maya’; and when it is dominated by the Tama Guna, it is called ‘Tama Guni Maya’. These have been described in verse no. 10 below.

Maya has *three names*—viz. (a) Maha Maya—or the great powers exhibited by Brahm at the cosmic level. This Maya is the progenitor of all other types of Mayas which keep the individual creature trapped in their net. The Maha Maya is the virtual mistress of all the delusions and misconceptions and their attendant ignorance that keep all the creatures of this creation enthralled by their deceptive charm. (b) Yog Maya—this is the stupendous magical powers created by the union of the supreme authority of creation known as Brahm, and the mystical and esoteric powers that delusions and hallucinations can create for the creature. (c) Maya Shakti—this is the ‘shakti’ or power and authority displayed by Maya in association with Brahm from whom it acquires its stupendous energy and powers.

Refer also to Kanda/Canto 2, verse nos. 33, 44-45 of our present Upanishad in the context of Maya.]

10. The Maya that has the Tama Guna in dominance is represented by Rudra (the angry form of Shiva that brings about destruction and annihilation of creation).

The Maya that has the Sata Guna in dominance is represented by Vishnu (the sustainer, protector and the benevolent care-taker of creation).

The Maya that has the Raja Guna in dominance is represented by Brahma (the creator who indulged in the tricky job of creating all sorts of delusions and illusions, as well as the world with all its material sense objects and the subjects that would populate it and enjoy it, thereby keeping the creator engrossed in its magical charms).

The Maya that has a combination of the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna appearing in equal proportion as a dominant factor, with the Sata Guna taking the back seat, is represented by Indra and other Gods. None of the Gods in the countless number of Gods in the pantheon can be said to possess Satvic qualities—i.e. none of them can be cited as an example of exemplary qualities of virtuousness, nobility, auspiciousness, righteousness, truthfulness, holiness, piety, purity, chastity, incorruptibility, trustworthiness, sincerity, honesty and other good virtues that the Sata Guna stands for.

[None of the Gods are a perfect image of the Supreme Being known as Brahm as they represent only a tiny fraction of one or the other aspect of Brahm. So, while Brahm

includes all of them in its being at once, none of them can claim to be Brahm in its entirety, for they represent only one particular aspect of Brahm. For instance, the creator Brahma represents that aspect of Brahm which 'creates'; Vishnu symbolizes that aspect of Brahm which is concerned with the sustenance of creation; and Rudra stands for the power of Brahm to rein-in and crush even the most formidable of creatures and bring about an end of this creation mercilessly and ruthlessly if it spins out of control. It ought to be noted that the Sanskrit word 'Rudra' and the English word 'ruthless' have the same root—i.e. 'ru'. Similarly, Shiva is that aspect of Brahm which is marked by the grand eclectic virtues of high wisdom, enlightenment, dispassion, renunciation and spiritual beauty. It is this aspect of Brahm that is lauded in this Upanishad as the 'Pashupati Brahm'—i.e. the Brahm which has controlled the animal-like, evil and corrupt world. In other words, Shiva who trounces the wicked and the evil is the Lord regarded as the closest God to Brahm.]

Out of this pantheon of Gods it is only Lord Aghor (Shiva) who stands out as being neutral, full of equanimity, and as being indifferent to the effects of one or the other Gunas in the true sense.

[That is, he is not at all influenced by the dominance of one or the other Gunas. His character is absolutely immaculate, steady and untainted because it is not at all affected by the characteristic influences of any of the three Gunas. This is why Lord Shiva is equated with Brahm, the Supreme Being. This is also why he is called 'Maheshwar'—the Great Lord, an epithet not even applied to Vishnu who is so loved by the creatures of the creation because he takes care of them. And therefore, this aspect of Shiva is equivalent to Brahm, the Lord who is also known as Pashupati—one who controls animal-like instincts which impel all creatures to remain indulged and engrossed in enjoying the sense organs and the sense objects of this world.] (10).

11. Pashupati Rudra (i.e. Lord Shiva)¹ is the doer or performer of all Yagyas (fire sacrifices; he represents the Brahma priest). Lord Vishnu is the Adhvaryu (the priest who takes care of the details of the rituals). And Indra (the king of Gods) is the Hota (a special category of priest)².

*The Supreme Being known as the 'Maheshwar Brahm'³, the Great Ishwar (Lord God) known as Brahm, who resides in the inner-self (of all the living beings as the pure consciousness known as the Atma) is the patron deity, the Brahm (the God), to whom the sacrifice is offered, and he is the one who enjoys the benefits of the fire sacrifice. This supreme Lord is also known as 'Manas Brahm'—literally the Supreme Being who lives in the subtle heart as well as in the conscious and the sub-conscious mind of the creature. It is this Lord who is the real beneficiary of all the good and auspicious deeds done by the creature. In other words, the real beneficiary of all good and auspicious deeds is the creature himself, and no one else. This is because the 'true self' of any creature (living being) is his Atma, his pure conscious soul, and the Atma is a microcosmic counterpart, a perfect image, of the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm or Pranav.

[The term 'Mana' has two components—viz. the 'subtle heart' because it is here that the Atma lives, and 'subtle aspects of the conscious mind' because it is here that the grand virtues that distinguish Brahm, such as wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge, deep insight, intelligence, erudition, sagacity, the ability to discriminate and differentiate between the right and the wrong, etc. are located. That is, the real benefit of doing the fire

sacrifice with devotion and faith is derived by the Atma or the inner-self of the creature which finds auspiciousness and holiness with this endeavour. The fire of the sacrifice symbolically burns all the taints and impurities that may have mired the purity and divinity of the Atma because of its association with this world full of corruptions and impurities.] (11).

[Note—*This stanza can be interpreted as follows also—‘The real beneficiary of the fire sacrifice or any other forms of auspicious deeds is the supreme Lord known as ‘Maheshwar’, the Great Ishwar, who is also known as Brahm. This Brahm resides in the subtle Mana (heart, conscience and sub-conscious mind) of the aspirant as his Atma which is pure consciousness and the concerned individual’s ‘true self’. In other words, the real beneficiary of all good and auspicious deeds is the creature himself, and no one else.

¹The *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 14 which stresses that ‘Isha’ or the Lord Shiva, who is regarded as the supreme Lord of creation, is also known as ‘Pashupati’. His divine consort is said to be ‘Swaha’. In mythology, Swaha is a personification of the oblation offered to the fire sacrifice. Swaha is also depicted as the daughter of Daksha Prajapati and wife of Agni, the Fire-God; she is said to preside over burnt offerings. Her body consists of the four Vedas and her limbs are the branches of the Vedas, called Angas.

²The *Brahma priest* is the head, the senior most and elder class of priest who is a representative of Brahma, the creator and patriarch of creation. Brahma was the first God who did the cosmic fire sacrifice and started the tradition of fire sacrifices and worshipping of the Fire in order to empower one to successfully undertake any given enterprise. This priest uses the hymns of the Rig Veda.

The *Hota priest* is the priest who offers oblation to the sacred fire; he uses the hymns of the Atharva Veda. The Hota priest offers the oblations on behalf of the patron who finances the fire sacrifice. Since in earlier times only kings and other noble men had the wherewithal to hold elaborate fire sacrifices involving huge outlay of money, the king of Gods, Indra, is cited here as being the Hota priest as he made arrangements for the material things needed for the completion of the fire sacrifice. Besides this point, Indra was the God of rain, and therefore his nod was needed for a good harvest from which the grain could be collected to be offered to the supreme deity. Therefore, metaphorically and by implication it was Indra who was himself offering the oblations to the Supreme Being.

The *Adhvaryu priest* chants the hymns of the Yajur Veda. With the same logic as applied for the Hota priest, Vishnu was the Adhvaryu priest because he took care of the nitty-gritty of creation; Vishnu ensured that the details of maintenance of creation were taken care of like this priest who takes care of the Mantras associated with the various Gods and Goddesses who preside over the various aspect of the mundane life on earth.

³It is to be noted here that the term ‘Maheshwar’ is traditionally applied to Lord Shiva who is also known as Rudra. But a fine distinction must be made between Shiva who is honoured as Maheshwar, and Shiva who is known as Rudra. Rudra is not the complete Brahm as clearly stressed in verse no. 10 for the simple reason that the lowly quality of Tama Guna dominates him, and it is due to this Tama Guna that he is so angry and wrathful. On the other hand, that form of Shiva which is holy, wise, enlightened and self-realised, and which is the patron deity of ascetics and sages is known as Aghor, the renunciate and dispassionate form of Shiva who is ever-submerged in meditation and contemplation. This Shiva is pure, holy, truthful, enlightened and blissful. These are the hallmark virtues of the Atma, the pure consciousness that is ‘Chinmaya’ (truthful, enlightened, blissful—refer verse no. 14). Hence, the Shiva who is ‘Maheshwar’ is the one who possesses the eclectic qualities possessed by the Atma at the individual level of

creation, and of the supreme transcendental Atma known as the supreme Brahm at the cosmic level of creation.]

12. The 'Manas Brahm' (as described in verse no. 11 above) has a subtle, a divine and a sublime form or aspect or facet known as 'Hans'¹, 'So-a-Ham'², etc.

[This Manas Brahm obviously is the pure conscious Atma as the divine bird Hans, the Swan, is frequently used in the Upanishads as a metaphor for the Atma to indicate the latter's immaculacy, holiness, purity and divinity, along with a high degree of wisdom, enlightenment and erudition. Since the Atma is also the 'self' of the creature, a person who performs a fire sacrifice with a holistic approach is expected to become highly self-realised and spiritually awakened or enlightened so much so that when he declares 'I am that Brahm' (So-a-Ham), he actually means it and is not being pretentious or deceitful. He is deemed to have understood the esoteric meaning of the term 'Brahm' vis-à-vis his own truthful 'self' known as the Atma.]

This symbolic fire sacrifice (that is done to attain this eclectic state of existence when the aspirant becomes enough self-realised to understand that he is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified in the form of his Atma known as Hans) is actually done by practicing meditation upon Naad.

What is it? When the seeker of Brahm becomes completely submerged in the thoughts of Brahm and the Atma, when he continuously meditates upon the pure consciousness by employing the Mantra 'Hans' (as described in a number of Upanishads for this purpose), his inner-self begins to resonate with the sound of Naad³ (i.e. the cosmic sound which is said to be generated by the vibrations in the ether created by the resonance of the cosmic Consciousness). This sound flows in a continuous stream like the flow of oil on a clean surface. Its vibrations reverberate in the nerves and veins of the practitioner's body so much so that he becomes oblivious of everything else in this world.

Any disruption in this state of transcendental existence of continuous bliss and stability is the state of existence known as the Jiva—i.e. the Atma that lacks steadiness of bliss and tranquility, and is therefore tossed and tumbled around by the changing nature of the gross world around it.

[In other words, the 'Jiva' or the living being is an entity that is different from Brahm by the virtue of its losing its connection with the Atma, the pure consciousness. Otherwise, there is no distinction between the Jiva and Brahm.] (12).

[Note—¹The eclectic Mantra *Hans*—refer verse no. 4 of this Kanda/Canto 1 and its note. The metaphysical importance and relevance of a Swan vis-à-vis the Atma have been explained as note of verse no. 20 of the present Kanda/Canto 1 of this Upanishad.

²The Mantra *So-a-Ham*—This Mantra has been described in a number of Upanishads—viz. (i) Sam Veda = Yogchudamani Upanishad, verse no. 83. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse no. 34, 78-79; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-133; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 28; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 17, Canto 4, verse nos. 1.11-2, Canto 5, verse nos. 69-72. (iii) Atharva Veda = Tripadvibhuta Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 5, paragraph no. 15.

³*Naad* is the cosmic sound that is said to be generated in the cosmic ether due to the vibrations caused by pulsations of Consciousness. It is the subtlest form of sound and stands for the subtlest form of dynamism of this cosmic Consciousness that the Upanishads prefer to call Brahm. In this manifestation of Naad, Brahm is called Pranav. The cosmic sound of Naad is encrypted in the form of the monosyllabic Mantra known as OM. Therefore it follows that OM is a word manifestation or representative of the cosmic

Naad which stands for the cosmic form of life-generating energy and dynamism called Consciousness. The divine entity that possesses this virtue is the Supreme Being known as Brahm.

Now, Hans is a bird—i.e. it is a living being with a gross body which harbours the same Consciousness inside it in the form of the Atma. This Atma possesses all the eclectic virtues that Brahm possesses. Therefore, for all practical purposes, both the ‘Hans’ and ‘OM’ refer to the same cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm, albeit at two different levels of creation. While the term ‘OM’ refers to the existence of the Consciousness at the cosmic level in the form of Pranav or Brahm, the term ‘Hans’ refer to the same Consciousness that resides inside the gross body of the individual creature as his Atma.

This word OM is an ethereal sound that is used during Yoga or meditation exercises to contemplate upon Brahm because its repetition results in submerging the practitioner in a continuous and overwhelming stream of sound waves, of increasing frequency and pitch, that are generated by the vibrations caused by continuous repetition of OM. The sound reverberates throughout his inner being so much so that it reaches a crescendo. It is then that the practitioner is said to hear the cosmic Naad, the cosmic background sound in the ether which is believed to be generated by the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm. It is much like the case of one listening to a favourite radio station only when he catches the particular frequency.]

13. This Hans (Atma) is an image or personification of Parmatma, the supreme Atma which is the cosmic Consciousness. Hans moves or prevails both in the outside world as well as in the inner-self of the creature (i.e. the microcosmic aspect of creation). In the inner-self, this Parmatma lives in the form of the ‘Suparna’ (a divine bird that is auspicious and with golden wings).

[Here, the Suparna refers to the Hans, the divine Swan from the perspective of the Upanishads. From the perspective of the Purans, the word ‘Suparna’ though refers to the bird Garuda which is the vehicle of Lord Vishnu. But since Vishnu is also known as the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all-pervading, invisible gross body of Brahm.

Therefore, the verse, simply put, means that the Parmatma, the supreme transcendental Atma, lives in the inner-self of a living being as his individual Atma. This Atma is wise and enlightened. It is likened to the bird Swan because this bird is regarded as a metaphor for these grand virtues. Again, just like the Swan that floats majestically and with dignity on the surface of the water of a lake, remaining unaffected by the impurities present in the water, the Atma too lives in a body with the same attitude and dignity. A wise man understands that he bears the cosmic Consciousness in his inner-self as the Atma which is as immaculate and dignified as the Swan floating on the surface of a lake.

There is another reason why the metaphor of the Swan is used for a wise man who is lost in deep meditation on the ‘self’ and the ‘truth’. The neck of the Swan is curved inwards like the alphabet U with its beak lying almost parallel to its abdomen as it floats calmly on the surface of the water. For a casual observer this posture reminds him of a person who is lost in some deep thoughts. Hence, when ancient sages and seers were searching for an instance to illustrate the state of existence of a man lost in deep meditation and contemplation they hit upon the metaphor of the Swan as being the most appropriate one.] (13).

14-15. [This verse describes the symbolic form of the Hans, the enlightened Atma, in its subtle form. In other words, a wise and enlightened creature who has become self-realised understands that Brahm has a subtle body as represented by the entities enumerated in this verse, and not a gross form as represented by the world and the way the different Gods have been depicted to exist in this creation by the Purans. This fact is also endorsed in verse no. 10 which expressly states that none of the Gods are truly holy and divine and complete in the correct sense! This is because all of them have one or the other of the three Gunas as the dominant factor, whereas Brahm is truly holy, divine and immaculate because he has all of them in equal proportions, thereby one neutralizes the other. In other words, the Gods are not neutral; they are not perfect. On the other hand, Brahm is not only neutral but also perfect. These Gods represent one or more than one divine aspects of Brahm, but not Brahm in its entirety.]

Anything that is extremely subtle and sublime cannot be visibly seen as opposed to one that is gross, but subtle and sublime entities have a wider reach, are infinite, and are inherently free from either worldly taints or limitations that come with being gross. That is why Brahm par-se is invisible while the same Brahm's various manifestations in the form of different Gods are visible to a devotee as endorsed in the Purans.

Now, Brahm also lives as the Atma of the individual Jiva (living being; the creature) and as the Gunas that this Jiva possesses. The obvious difference between the Gods and the Jiva lies in the degree of subtlety that their Atma displays. So whereas the Atma that lives inside the Jiva is surrounded by the grossness associated with the physical body, the Atma of the Gods is of a highly subtle nature. A Jiva can become God-like if he sheds his grossness and worldly tendencies. This is the aim of all spiritual practices. However, if the spiritual aspirant has even a trace of desires left in him, though this desire may be of a noble and righteous nature, he would not get complete Mukti, and instead become God-like. The Atma that has assumed a subtle body of a God becomes omnipresent and very powerful as compared to the Atma that lives in a gross body of a Jiva. While the Atma as the 'self' of a God has no shape and attribute, that which is the 'self' of the Jiva has a definite shape and attributes.]

The 'Hans' (Brahm; the cosmic Consciousness; the Atma) is revealed in this creation at a subtle and microcosmic plane in the form of the following—(i) as the ninety-six Tattwas (principal elements)¹ of creation, (ii) as the eclectic virtues (and the sublime entity represented by them or which is a personification of these virtues) that are compositely known as 'Chinmaya' (enlightenment, wisdom, consciousness, and bliss), (iii) as the three Gunas (inherent qualities in creation, such as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna), (iv) as the nine Tattwas², (v) as the three Trinity Gods such as Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of creation who are manifestations of the three aspects of the dynamic energy (the 'fire power' that drives the dynamo of creation) of this Hans (Brahm), (vi) as being either tied by the various Granthis³ (spiritual knots or stumbling block or mill-stones that act as obstacles in one's spiritual progress) on the one hand, and being free from their shackling effects by acknowledging the presence of the Advaitya Granthi (the presence of the non-dual Brahm in the form of the subtle Atma) on the other hand, and (vii) as being the wearer of the sacred thread (which means that the Jiva is diligent in both the performance of the fire sacrifices⁴ as well as pursuing the sacred knowledge of Brahm by following the various Sutras ('threads'; the various spiritual formulas) as prescribed in the Upanishads and other scriptures (14-15).

[Note—¹The ninety-six Tattwas—refer Krishna Yajur Veda's *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 2-14.

Reference: (i) Krishna Yajur Veda = *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 2-14.
(ii) Atharva Veda = *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 5.

The *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda describes the 96 Tattvas elaborately in Canto 1, verse nos. 2-14.

²The nine Tattwas—The three fundamental Gunas, i.e. the Sata, the Raja and the Tama, the three basic characters of the Atma known as Sat-Chit-Anand, i.e. Sat (truth), Chitta (consciousness) and Anand (bliss), and the three forms of divinity represented by the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder of creation, represent the nine Tattwas of creation.

³Granthi—The word *Granthi* literally means node, a nodule or module or knot or a wart-like or a gland-like structure. It has various connotations depending upon the context in which the word is used. For instance, it might symbolically mean the different gates in a strong fort which must be overcome or broken before one enters the fort or overruns it as done during war times.

The numerous emotional, sentimental and spiritual hurdles that an aspirant faces are also referred to as the Granthi because they are like the hard shell of the nut which is difficult to crack. Only when this shell is cracked can one find the nut. Similarly, only when one overcomes the numerous obstacles and hurdles faced by him in his spiritual pursuit that it is possible for him to have access to the fount of eternal bliss and peace that comes with Brahm realisation which is being aware of the Absolute Truth of existence.

According to the metaphysical interpretation of the term Granthi, it is the various knots present in the heart that shackle the Atma and prevent its liberation and deliverance. These Granthis are called Hridaya Granthis because they stand in the way of a man obtaining freedom from his fetters and keep him tied to this world. Once he is able to rupture them, he finds liberation even while he is still alive in this world. This fact has been clearly emphasized in Katho-panishad, Canto 2, Valli 3, verse no. 15 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition. Refer also to Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse no. 8.

From anatomical point of view, the Granthis refer to the ganglions that help to coordinate the different nerves just like major junction boxes in the network of electric wires in a building. The word Granthi also refers to the glands that control all the major functions of the body, including those of the nerves and veins. Just like a knot that helps to tie something, these Granthis of the body bind the subtle energy present inside the body and prevent it from being dissipated or going to waste; it helps to preserve energy and stops it from being released if not wanted. If we treat them as representing the ganglions then it means that by the process of Yoga in which the subtle energy of the Kundalini is released in the spinal cord, or the Sushumna Naadi to be precise, these hitherto clogged and inactive ganglions are reactivated and they begin to function in prime shape. If we consider them as glands then it would mean that the functioning of these glands is restored by the process of Yoga, and this in turn helps the body to work properly.

The Granthi symbolises the center of power and authority because it is the nodal point from where all the authority needed for governance of the body spread out. It is also like the seat of power and authority of a king, much like the strong fortress from where he rules over the kingdom. They represent the nodal points in the body where the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva or Rudra the concluder, have their symbolic residence, and it is from here they control the functioning of the body of the individual as well as everything that he thinks and does. If the individual is regarded as the microcosm of the entire creation, then the Atma would be

the supreme Brahm, and the various patron deities of the organs would be the different Gods of creation. The Brahm Vidya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse nos. 70-71 describes the three main Granthis where these three Gods have their symbolic abodes in the body of the individual creature—viz. Brahm Granthi, Vishnu Granthi, and Rudra Granthi. They have also been described in (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 86-89; Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 67-68, 85-86.

⁴The sacred thread is worn by Brahmins when they perform a fire sacrifice. Verse no. 11 above has already established the symbolism of the three types of Brahmin priests who perform the fire sacrifice. Since the sacred thread has three intertwined strands, it means here that all the three priests should work in a coordinated manner in order to derive any benefit from the fire sacrifice. Otherwise it loses its relevance and significance just like a sacred thread that is not woven according to a prescribed manner.

Conversely, it means that the honouring of the Trinity Gods and understanding the fact that they represent the supreme Brahm and his dynamism in the cosmic form is equivalent to wearing the sacred thread in a symbolic manner by the spiritual aspirant.

Taken in simple words this verse means that just as the important aspect of creature or a living being is his Atma for which the term 'Hans' is used as a metaphor, the understanding of the essential principles of creation, such as the question as to how it was created, how it is regulated and how it would ultimately end, and other such relevant metaphysical questions is equivalent to being acquainted with Brahm because the latter is the supreme Authority that is responsible for every aspect of this creation.

The 'sacred thread' is the eclectic knowledge of Brahm that binds all individual units of creation into one single whole. It is the knowledge that it is Brahm that is the thread which runs through the various units or components of this creation as enumerated in the aforesaid verse, stringing them together to make a structure that is known as this world. This structure has two aspects or facets—one that is visible and gross, and the other that is subtle and underlying.]

16. The sacred thread known as the Yagyopavit is also known as the Brahm-Sutra¹ (referred to in the closing lines of verse no. 15). This is because it refers to the divine spiritual knowledge that pertains to the supreme transcendental Brahm.

This sacred thread also stands for the different forms of the sacred fire sacrifices; these fire sacrifices can only be done when the person who performs them wears this thread. This is because this thread reminds him that the fire sacrifice is the medium which links him with Brahm.

Again, since the fire sacrifice itself is a personified form of Brahm, it is a natural corollary that the sacred thread also stands for Brahm.

Further, the Sanskrit term for the sacred thread is 'Sutra', literally having two connotations—one obviously means 'a thread', and the other more important meaning is 'a formula, a principle, or a tenet'. Hence, to wear the sacred thread actually means to know the secret tenets of Brahm, to be aware of the principles that pertain to the supreme Truth known as Brahm, to be conversant with the formula which can provide one with access to the pinnacle of spiritual glory and attainment, a knowledge of the Divine that can make one spiritually liberated and emancipated.

The sacred thread that is used (worn) as a symbol of purity during fire sacrifices has a gross form, but its subtler form represents the purity of the fire itself (because there is nothing as powerful as the fire as far as the ability to purify is concerned).

The sacred thread, once again, is used as a symbol of purity and holiness during religious ceremonies because it represents Brahm, the supreme deity worshipped during these ceremonies. It represents the virtues and glories of Brahm, and it is this sublime and subtle aspect of the sacred thread that is the actual one which is of any benefit to the wearer.

It symbolizes the 'Brahm-Sutra'—the esoteric secrets of Brahm, the profound principles of Brahm, the grand tenets of the philosophy of Brahm. It is the link or the bridge between the Jiva who is unaware of Brahm, and the Brahm itself.

The physical form of the sacred thread reminds the wearer constantly that his body is a shrine in which the Supreme Being is consecrated as the Atma, and so he must be very careful of his thoughts, his deeds and his actions so as not to do anything that undermines or defiles the holy nature of this shrine (body).

Therefore, the sacred thread known as the Yagyopavit and the tenets of Brahm known as the Brahm-Sutra are synonyms of each other (16).

[Note—¹The Sacred Thread/Yagyopavit/Brahm Sutra/Tri Sutra—The *Trisutra* are the three threads used in making the sacred thread worn around the neck. These three threads stand for the three Gunas or qualities that Brahm possesses. These are the following-- 'Sata Guna or quality' is the noble, virtuous, auspicious and good qualities present in a creature. It is marked by such high standards of ethical existence that have, as their characteristic features, such qualities as coolness of head, peace, contentedness, humility, devotion, wisdom, mercy, compassion, creativity, selflessness, service, righteousness, virtuousness, holiness and nobility of thought and action etc. As is evident, these qualities are the best qualities that one can have in him; they have a spiritual dimension to them; they are spiritually uplifting and give a divine halo to those who practice them. (b) 'Raja Guna or quality' covers such qualities as worldly yearnings, passions, stormy nature, agitated behaviour, ambitions, desires, selfishness, expansionist tendencies, desire to sustain etc. All these pertain to this materialistic world. Such qualities give worldly fame and prosperity. If these qualities are judiciously mixed with the Satwic qualities, then they provide the person the better of the two worlds, both in terms of worldly fame as well as spiritual well being. (c) 'Tama Guna or quality' is the third quality; it is the most degrading, denigrating and contemptible of the three characteristics in a person, leading him to such negative traits as sins, vices, perversions, greed, avarice, haughtiness, pride, lust, attachments, yearnings, intoxication, wild behaviour, promiscuity, evils, utter disregard for anything which is righteous, ethical and noble etc.—i.e. in brief, immoral, denigrating and depraved behaviour marked by grossness, crassness and recklessness of misdemeanours. It is the lowest and meanest of the three qualities.

The proportion of the three Gunas decides the nature, natural temperament, tendencies, habits and inclination of the creatures. For example, a person with a greater proportion of 'Satvic' (noble) characteristic will be considered nobler than a man with a greater proportion of 'Rajasic' or 'Tamsic' qualities. So we can say that sages, seers, prophets, scholars and generally enlightened persons have a high degree of 'Satvic' qualities in them; kings and householders who live a noble life are example of those with higher amount of 'Rajasic' quality in them; while sinners, killers, drunks, rowdy elements, cheats etc. are those people with higher 'Tamsic' quality in them. Since the creation consists of all types of people, Brahm is deemed to possess all these qualities in him.

The external sacred thread is worn to remind the wearer of his duty and responsibility towards the Brahm who resides in his own bosom. When he has matured enough that he does not need any reminder for this purpose, it is expected of him to then discard the external thread, and instead remain engrossed in the thoughts of Brahm in all planes of

existence, whether he is awake or asleep. This is actually what is done when one takes the vows of Sanyas (a life of renunciation) when he is ordained to discard all external symbols such as the sacred thread, the tuft of hair on the head, the water-pot, the ochre clothes, the monk's staff, etc.

The following Upanishads also deal with the concept of the sacred thread—(i) Krishna Yajur Veda = Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 4-15. (ii) Atharva Veda = Par Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 3-20; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 17, 79, 80-82, 84-85, 88-89. The Mantra dedicated to the Yagyopavit is narrated in Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 37.]

17. The various Matras (vowel sounds; the units, letters or syllables of any given Mantra; the length and duration of invocation of various Mantras during contemplation and meditation) are like the units or parts of the symbolic body of this Brahm Sutra. [Since the term 'Sutra' means a formula or principle which can be known or taught only by the medium of words, and words are built around letters and syllables, it is implied here that the Matras are the different metaphysical doctrines and eclectic principles which are an inseparable component of the secrets pertaining to Brahm. They are the 'Sutra'—the thread—which links the individual creature to the supreme transcendental Divinity known as Brahm. They are the Sutra—the formula—that help the individual unravel the profound secrets of the divine Brahm. They are the Sutra—the sacred tenets—pertaining to Brahm.]

A wise, intelligent and self-realised spiritual aspirant is called a 'Hans' (i.e. he is treated as a wise man who has great wisdom and discriminatory powers to pick up the truth and discard the falsehood) when he remains perpetually submerged in doing meditation and contemplation upon the universal ubiquitous 'truth' known as Brahm, or upon his 'self' known as the Atma. This Atma is an image of the supreme transcendental Atma known as the Parmatma. The terms Atma, Parmatma and Brahm are synonyms of each other. When he does so, he is actually doing a fire sacrifice in the true sense, though it is done in a symbolic manner. This form of fire sacrifice is done internally as it involves the mind and its sub-conscious faculties which remain focused on the 'self' and the truth of creation.

This form of internal fire sacrifice has far greater spiritual value than the one done in the external world. The internal form of the fire sacrifice is subtle and sublime, and consequentially its results are also subtle and sublime in equal proportion. The external form of the fire sacrifice involving elaborate and time consuming rituals is done in a gross world and involves gross forms of physical offerings. Therefore its rewards are also gross and superficial. From the perspective of the long-term spiritual welfare of the Jiva, the internal form of the fire sacrifice has far more value than its external counterpart.

Hence, in this form of the internal fire sacrifice the various Mantras he employs to meditate and contemplate are the symbolic Sutra (the sacred thread) that is worn by a person performing the external forms of the fire sacrifice. [In other words, a wise man who uses the different Mantras to meditate upon the Atma and the supreme Brahm is deemed to be wearing the sacred thread even if he does not physically wear the thread on his body. These Mantras are equivalent to the sacred thread worn during formal forms of the fire sacrifice and are equally purifying and holy. The natural corollary to this observation is that those who meditate upon Brahm, who know the secret of Brahm, who are self-realised in as much as they are well-versed about the esoteric secrets of the

Atma—such people need not bother about the necessity of wearing the sacred thread on their physical body. For such enlightened and wise persons, the various Mantras and their Matras are the instruments that he employs to attain the same spiritual glory and divine achievements that others get by doing elaborate fire sacrifices and purifying rituals.]

[Which Mantra does he employ to do the symbolic fire sacrifice? This is answered now—] The Pranav or the Mantra known as ‘OM’ is the symbolic Brahm-Sutra (the secret formula which leads one directly to Brahm-realisation as it is a sound representative of the cosmic Consciousness) that is employed in doing the eclectic form of the fire sacrifice known as Brahm Yagya (which implies an internal form of fire sacrifice consisting of meditation and contemplation upon the pure cosmic Consciousness that resides inside one’s own inner-self as the Atma, the form of the fire sacrifice endorsed in verse no. 12).

The subtle and sublime cosmic Consciousness that inspires the generation of the sound of OM, or which is at the heart of OM and forms its soul, is also known as Hans. Since OM refers to the supreme transcendental Consciousness known as Brahm, the ‘Hans’ here refers to this ‘conscious’ factor which not only enables the generation of sound in the otherwise lifeless, pacific and inert cosmic ether, but also enables an equally lifeless, inert and gross body of the creature to actually hear sound. [Why does a dead body not hear anything? It is because the ‘Hans’ residing inside it has flown away; the ‘Atma’ or the ‘conscious soul’ has left it.]

Doing a Brahm Yagya in the proper method is a means of obtaining Moksha. [That is, meditating and contemplating upon Brahm with true wisdom and enlightenment, sans any pretensions and deceit, is the only way for attaining spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. It is the only way by which a creature can overcome the torments and tribulations associated with delusions. It is the only way by which he can break free from the cycle of birth and death to find eternal rest and peace. It is the only way by which he can find or discover the real and absolute ‘Truth’.] (17).

[Note—The importance of the internal form of fire sacrifice has also been elaborately described in a number of Upanishads, viz. (i) Atharva Veda = The present Pashupata Brahmin Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 12, 14-15, 17-22, 29-31; Mundak Upanishad, Canto 1, section 2, verse no. 7-10; Prashna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-4. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = (i) Avadhut Upanishad, verse no. 7; (ii) Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse nos. 21-22; (iii) Yog Kundalini Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 3-4 (which describes that the food eaten by an individual should be treated as an offering made for Shiva residing inside the body as the Atma).

The importance and the significance of the word Hans has been elaborately explained in verse nos. 4 and 12 of this Kanda.]

18. Brahm Sandhya (remembering Brahm, offering oblations and prayers to him silently by meditation and contemplation at least three times a day—at dawn, at noon and at dusk) is the way of doing the mental or internal form of the fire sacrifice.

The doing of this Brahm Sandhya is a sign that the person is remembering Brahm internally (i.e. he is meditating and contemplating upon the cosmic Consciousness residing in his inner-self as the Atma; it is a sign that he has become self and Brahm realised). [Refer verse no. 20 also.] (18).

19. A true Brahmin¹ is one who wears the Yagya Sutra (the sacred thread worn during the performance of fire sacrifices, especially the symbolic one as narrated in verse no. 16), who employs the Pranav Mantra (i.e. the OM Mantra) for his religious needs (such as when doing Japa or repetition of a Mantra done during meditation or while invoking a deity during formal forms of worship, Yoga or meditation, Dhyan or contemplation, etc.), and who is well-versed in the principles of Brahm Yagya (spiritual practices which are equivalent to a formal fire sacrifice but done in a subtle and symbolic manner which lead directly to the realisation of the supreme cosmic Consciousness and the absolute Truth known as Brahm).

The Gods (the term is a metaphor for the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, holiness, divinity, nobility etc.) are to be found in the diligent observance of the principles that define a man as a Brahmin. [That is, if a man is a true Brahmin as outlined above, he is deemed to be living God in the sense that he would possess all the eclectic virtues that collectively defined as being 'godly'.]

The Hans (the enlightened Atma, the self-realised and Brahm-realised person) who adheres to the principles of Sutra (i.e. who follows the grand spiritual principles and scriptural tenets that lead to Brahm-realisation, who offers his obeisance to the Supreme Being in the manner outlined in this Upanishad, who leads a life like a true Brahmin as described above, and who understands the secrets of Brahm as well as that of the Atma as a representative of Brahm) is deemed to be doing the Yagya (the fire sacrifice) in the true sense.

There is no difference between the Hans and Pranav. That is, there is no difference between the immaculate Atma, the pure conscious 'self' known as the Hans, and the supreme transcendental Brahm known as Pranav. [Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness that produces vibrations of life in the ether that are heard in the form of Naad (refer verse no. 12). These dynamic vibrations in the cosmic ether produce sound that is encapsulated in the monosyllabic word OM. Hence, the OM is a sound form or the cosmic Naad known as Pranav which stands for Brahm because it is the latter which has generated this sound. Only something that has life, energy, vitality and dynamism in it, anything that has consciousness pulsating in it, would be able to generate similar energy and vibrations in another entity when it comes in contact with the former.

For instance, when electricity flows in a wire and another wire is joined to it, the latter also begins to conduct electricity, but if the earlier wire was dead and there was no electric current flowing in it then no matter how hard one tries the second wire will show no electric current in it.

Similarly, the cosmic ether is neutral and calm. It is the presence of the 'Consciousness' in it that creates subtle waves of energy which translate into the cosmic sound known as the Naad. If we take the example of the Swan floating in the placid water of the lake, it is the pulsation created by the breathing of the bird that generate subtle ripples in the otherwise absolute calm surface of the water.

If the Atma is personified as a divine Swan known as Hans, the supreme cosmic Atma known as Brahm is personified in the form of Pranav which is name assigned to the cosmic sound known as the Naad. This cosmic sound called Naad is represented by the word OM. [Refer verse no. 17 and 20 of this Canto 1 in this context.] (19).

[Note—¹Who a true Brahmin is has been outlined in other Upanishads as well.

References: (i) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition's Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 14. (ii)

Sam Veda tradition's Vajrasuchika Upanishad, verse no. 9.

The *Gayatri Upanishad* of Atharva Veda (the Gopth Brahman, Kandika 31-38) describes the Gayatri Mantra and the Savitri Mantra, and in its discussion it describes a Brahmin as being a personification of Brahm (Kandika 38). It says that a Brahmin personifies Truth and knowledge of this Truth personified as Brahm (Kandika 35-36), and the Vedas (Kandika 37).]

20. The worship of Hans¹ (Brahm; Pranav; the Supreme Being; the cosmic Consciousness; the pure conscious Atma) is done three times a day, called the 'Tri-Sandhya'. [This worship is called 'Tri-Sandhya' as it is done at three points of time in the day when one phase meets another. These are 'dawn' when the night meets the day, 'noon' when the morning meets the evening, and 'dusk' when the day meets the night. Refer also to verse no. 18.]

The three times symbolize the three Varnas (letters of the divine word OM standing for Brahm or Pranav). [The reference here is to the OM Mantra or the Pranav Mantra which is used to offer worship to the supreme transcendental Brahm three times of the day mentioned above. The word OM has three letters or syllables—'A' standing for initiation of creation symbolized by dawn, 'O' standing for development and growth of creation symbolized by the noon when the sun is at its best splendour and brilliance, and 'M' standing for end or conclusion of creation symbolized by dusk when the day ends and the darkness of night overtakes.]

This worship is accomplished by symbolically invoking the blessings of the three types of the sacred Fire².

The Atma, the pure 'self' and the cosmic 'consciousness', is a personification of these three sacred Fires. The Atma has the same characteristic virtues as that of the fire element. [That is, the Atma has the same magnificence, glory, splendour, radiance, powers, potentials, holiness, divinity and purity as the 'fire element'. Just like the 'fire' gives energy, light, warmth and dynamism to the entire creation, and it is impossible to imagine life and creation without it, it is equally impossible to imagine this creation without the Atma. In the cosmic perspective, this Atma is known as Brahm. Hence, it is Brahm that infuses life and vitality into the otherwise lifeless and inane gross creation.]

While offering obeisance and worship to this Atma, the worshipper employs the 'OM' Mantra which also consists of three letters or syllables, and has the same potentials and divine powers as the Atma that represents the fire element because OM stands for Brahm, the Supreme Being and the transcendental cosmic Consciousness.

By corollary therefore, both the Atma and OM refer to the same divine entity (Brahm, the true self) that is symbolized by the bird Hans (Swan). [Refer verse no. 17.19.]

Meditating and contemplating upon this Hans is known as the internal form of doing the fire sacrifice (20).

[Note—¹*Hans*—The enlightened and realised person thinks of himself as a Swan and feels exhilarated that he is not an ordinary man bogged down by worldly fetters, but an exalted soul that is like a Swan.

The bird *Swan* or *Hans* is considered the most pure, clean, wise, erudite and clever among the birds. It is said to eat pearls, which means it picks up and accepts only the best amid the variety of things available to it in the form of an assortment of various gems and jewels representing the dazzling charms of this world. It is also reputed to drink milk leaving aside the water content in it symbolizing its ability to imbibe the essence and the best, and leave the rest aside. It is also the vehicle of Goddess Saraswati, the patron

Goddess of knowledge, wisdom, intelligence, speech and learning, indicating that it bears these glorious virtues. Hence, the reference to a swan while describing a creature conscious of the vital wind or Pran passing through him means the basic, inherent and intrinsic tendency of that wisened and intelligent creature is to be the best, most pure and divine, wise, awakened and enlightened, adroit, clever and sagacious like the swan, and pick all the goodness and forsake all that is bad in this world. Saraswati rides on a swan, symbolizing the creature's inborn enlightenment and excellence of his mental caliber. Symbolically, Saraswati resides in his Pran because it rides on the swan, i.e. in his heart, throat and mind—that is, his heart has purity of emotions, he speaks well of all, and his wise words are sought after by all as priceless gems of wisdom, and his mind is intelligent, discerning and noble.

A wise man is expected to pick up the truth and leave aside the non-truths from the basket full of worldly charms of astounding proportions and myriad forms of temptations present in this creation.

Those wise men who have developed the level of wisdom, erudition and sagacity that they can discriminate between what is good and what is not, what is true and what is false, what is liberating and what is ensnaring for their soul are also honoured by the epithet of being a 'Hans' (Swan) because they are just like the Swan which has the legendary ability to pick up pearls from an assortment of gems, and drink milk leaving behind water and other adulterants in it. Even amongst such wise and enlightened men, those who have realised the 'truth' about their own self in the real sense, i.e. have become 'self-realised' and hence 'Brahm-realised' truthfully, and have consequentially attained the highest level of enlightenment and wisdom are called 'Param Hans'—literally meaning those who have accessed the 'supreme type of enlightenment'. The grand and auspicious virtues and characteristics of such an exalted Sanyasi who is self and Brahm realised has been described in detail in the Param Hans Parivrajak Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition.

The alphabet 'Ha' of the word 'Hans' is sounded by the vibration of the exhaled wind passing through the vocal cords present in the throat or the wind pipe which connects to the nose, while the alphabet 'Sa' is sounded by the root of the tongue which opens into the mouth when the breath is inhaled. Both the nose and the mouth open in the same cavity called the throat. Hence, the inter relationship between 'Ha' and 'Sa' is evident. The main objective of this Upanishad is to make the Yogi (a person who follows its tenets of meditation) aware that he is like the divine swan, but he was unaware of his own divinity and sublimity, his exalted and noble stature, till that was pointed out to him. So he must become one like a 'swan', remind himself constantly that he is like a swan, and he must not do anything or act in anyway which is not befitting his exalted and superior status which is equivalent to a wise swan.

During the twenty-four hour period covering a single day and night, a person inhales and exhales, or breathes, roughly twenty-one thousand times, because each cycle of inhalation and exhalation is equivalent to saying one Mantra 'Hans' consisting of the two syllables 'Ha and Sa' (refer Dhyanbindu Upanishad, verse no. 63).

Hans, the divine Swan, is also one of the twenty-four incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Vishnu had once appeared as a divine Swan to preach the four celestial sages Sankaadi who were the mental sons of the creator Brahma.

It so happened that Sankaadi approached Brahma and wanted to know how can someone, who wished to have Moksha (final liberation and deliverance from this material world; freedom from attachment to the sense objects of this world; emancipation and salvation), effectively control his mind and sub-conscious and divert them away from the material charms of the world and its sense objects, and towards the inner self where the Atma, the pure consciousness, resides?

Brahma was confused and did not have the answer. So they meditated upon Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, from whom Brahma was born. Thus Vishnu appeared as a divine Swan. The sages could not recognise the Lord in that form and asked who he was. Then Vishnu, in his form as a Swan, preached the great tenets of metaphysics and Vedanta to Sankaadi. Thus, this revelation of Vishnu as a Swan was an embodiment of the greatest and the most refined form of spiritual knowledge, erudition, wisdom and enlightenment. Henceforth, Swan came to be known as a synonym for these eclectic and divine virtues. This story appears in Srimad Bhagwat, 11/13.

The Swan is depicted as a vehicle of Saraswati, the Goddess of knowledge and wisdom. In other words, those who worship Swan ride on the crest of knowledge, wisdom, erudition, sagacity and enlightenment.

The *Yogchudamani Upanishad*, verse no. 93 clearly asserts that the 'Hans' is a metaphor for Pran. So when it is said in the present verse that Hans shows movement for instance, it refers to the movement in the form of the vital winds such as Pran (breath) which comes in and goes out of the body, the Apaana wind that moves down the intestines and helps the movement of food in the intestines, the Udaana wind that helps the body to rise etc. The proof of their movement lies in the fact that all the different functions of the body, including external movements such as walking, holding, speaking, eating and excreting etc. that are done by a man while awake are controlled by these winds, but when the man sleeps the external activities cease, making it appear that the vital winds are not moving. When a man is asleep, his vital winds are now moving inside his Naadis or nerves and veins in the form of his Pran or the vital life-giving factor called consciousness. But these winds present inside the body do not appear to move a bit; they do not show any vivid sign of movement at all; no one can observe the movement of the Udaana wind, the Vyaana wind or the Samaana wind and even the Apaana wind that are present inside the body of the creature. Even in the outside world, no one can actually see the wind or air move from one place to another; their movement is deduced indirectly when we observe the movement of leaves for example on a tree. Thus, this Hans in the form of the Pran shows movement on the one hand, and remains immobile on the other hand.

²The *three types of fire*:—References: (i) Sam Veda = Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 2, section 24; Canto 4, sections 11, 13, 14 and 17; Canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24. (ii) Atharva Veda = Atharva-shikha Upanishad, Kandika 1; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 2. (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Kathvalli Upanishad or Katho-panishad, Canto 1, Valli 1, verse nos. 7, 13-18; Canto 2, Valli 1, verse no. 8; Garbha Upanishad, paragraph no. 5; Kath Rudra Upanishad, verse no. 3

The three aspects of fire are said to be the following—the terrestrial fire that sustains life on the earth, the fire of the heavens which is used by the Gods, and the fire of the nether worlds or hell which is used to punish sinners.

Worship of the three important fires have been described in Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition in its Canto 2, section 24, while Canto 5, sections 4-10, 19-24 explain their great symbolic metaphysical significance.

The *Garhyapatya* fire—[Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 2/24/3-6, 4/11/1-2, 4/17/4.] This is the householder's fire. A householder has land and farm representing 'earth' in which he grows food. This food is grown with the help of the light of the Sun, and it is cooked in the fire of the fire-place in the house. Hence, the Garhyapatya fire, or the householder's fire, is intrinsically present and is implied in these 4 entities. It is an integral part of these four. The earth has the 'fire element' because without heat and warmth, no seed would germinate and no life can survive on this earth. The food has fire present inherently in it because it is the energy inherent in food which helps to energise

the creature that eats it. The presence of heat in the sun does not need to be explained because it is very evident.

The fire was the central piece of all religious life in early times of the Vedic period when a fire sacrifice was deemed to be the best religious activity that a righteous man can expect to do. In this context, the Garhyapatya fire is the main fire lit during such formal fire sacrifices. The fire pit was either square-shaped or rounded. In the context of the fire sacrifice, it was used for the purpose of daily rituals, cooking or warming the offerings, heating of the vessels, to perform circumambulation, to act as a main cauldron or reservoir of the sacred fire which was to be kept perpetually burning throughout the life of the householder once it was lit.

Regarding the *origin* of the Garhyapatya fire, the Atharva-shikha Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 1 says that it was created along with Brahma the creator (the first of the Trinity Gods), the Rig Veda, the Vasus, and the Gaytri Chanda at the beginning of creation by the supreme Creator Brahm, the Supreme Being, and it represents the first leg of Brahm and corresponds to the first letter A of OM.

The *Dakshinagni* fire—[Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 2/24/7-10, 4/13/1-2, 4/17/5.] This holy fire is a witness to making of charities when some water is poured as libation to the Gods. It signifies that the Gods are offered water to drink. To give water to the thirsty is the greatest form of charity. Therefore, this fire is symbolically present in water, and when it is poured, it signifies that the heat produced by sins committed by the person has been doused. Charities and donations make a man famous and renowned, hence the allusion to directions of the earth. His glory shines like the bright moon and he is called a star among human beings. He is the most exalted amongst his peers and compatriots even as the moon is most prominent amongst the stars in the sky.

Like in the case of the Garhyapatya fire, the fire that was lit in the main sacrificial shed or site just near the main fire pit but to the south of it and where donations and charities were made was called Dakshinagni fire. The fire pit for this fire was semi-circular or bow-shaped.

Regarding the *origin* of the Dakshinagni fire, the Atharva-shikha Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 1 says that it was created along with the Antariksha (the space above the earth), Lord Vishnu the sustainer (the second of the Trinity Gods) and Rudra (Brahm's macrocosmic form as the Viraat Purush), the Trishtup Chanda and the Yajur Veda by the supreme Creator Brahm, the Supreme Being, and it represents the second leg of Brahm and corresponds to the second letter 'U' of OM.

The *Ahawaniya* fire—[Refer Chandogya Upanishad, 2/24/11-16, 4/14/1-2, 4/17/6.] The Ahawaniya fire is lit during the fire sacrifices to respectfully invoke Gods, and invite them to come and participate in the sacrifice and accept offerings made to them. The word 'Aavaahan' in Sanskrit means to invite, invoke, to pray respectfully with the intention of welcoming. Since one uses one's mouth for these purposes, the fire in the form of the strength, energy and vigour of the spoken word and the power of speech residing in the mouth is called Ahawaniya fire. This fire was lit to invoke the Gods, and the Gods live in the heaven; hence the reference to the sky, heavens and electric. Since Pran is the best form of the vital winds, the allusion means that the Gods are the most exalted forms that exist in creation. The 'electric' is a metaphor for immense strength, potent and power, which of course the fire possesses. This inherent quality of Electric that it possess most stupendous powers and strength is likened to the presence of Brahm in it even as the great power and strength present in a man is due to the Atma or Pran present in him. Even as a man is useless without the presence of Pran in him, the Electric would lose its importance if there was no Brahm present in it which gives it its punch and strength.

In ancient times it was an established belief and tradition that the way to attain heaven was through the path of the fire sacrifice. The fire sacrifice was in effect a method to harness the spiritual energy inherent in the all pervading fire element which would sufficiently empower the person performing the fire sacrifice to achieve his goal. The sacrificial pit and the heat generated from it reminds one of the modern day nuclear reactors. Even as the strength and energy and powers of the atom can be harnessed for beneficial or ruinous effects through the nuclear reactor, depending upon the temperament and mental setup of the person who masters the science of atomic energy, the fire sacrifice could be similarly used either for auspicious purposes such as attaining eternal peace and tranquility for the tormented soul, or for attaining worldly glory and conquest. Harnessing of nuclear energy requires expertise, knowledge and skills not easy to master and not accessible to all. Building and operating a nuclear facility also is a daunting and elaborate job. Similarly, the ancient fire sacrifices required special skills and expertise, and it was not simply lighting any odd evening village community bonfire to the merriment of all those who sit around it to gossip about the day's events.

Regarding the *origin* of the Ahawaniya fire, the Atharva-shikha Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 1 says that it was created along with the Duloka (the heavens), the Aditya (the Sun God), Lord Rudra the concluder of creation (the third of the Trinity Gods), the Jagati Chanda and the hymns of the Sam Veda by the supreme Creator Brahm, the Supreme Being, and it represents the third leg of Brahm and corresponds to the third letter 'M' of OM.

From this perspective of doing a fire sacrifice in order to attain spiritual eternity and liberation, the 'units' of the special knowledge that Yam described to Nachiketa in verse no. 15 of Kathvalli Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition probably pertain to the steps to be followed in the construction of the fire pit—such as the type of bricks used, the number of bricks to be used, the geometrical design of the sacrificial pit, the type of wood to be used in the ceremony, the Mantras to be chanted, and other such finer details which must be diligently and strictly followed if any spiritual benefit is to be derived from the entire exercise. So, the sacrificial fire pit is like an oven in which the fuel of wood is added and the science of Mantras is used to order to generate immense energy that can empower the patron performing the fire sacrifice with stupendous potentials.

On the other hand, from the metaphysical perspective of harnessing the stupendous energy latent in the eternally burning fire element, Yam must have explained to Nachiketa the different forms of 'fire' as a manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm's astounding energy, potentials, powers and strength. The visible symbol of the eternal fire is the sun in the sky and the energy inherently present in the body of all living beings. It is a well known fact that no life can ever exist without heat and energy of the fire element. In Chandogya Upanishad of the Sam Veda tradition (Canto 4, Sub-cantos 5 and 7) it has been stated that Brahm is characterized by light and illumination (as opposed to darkness) which are the characteristic virtues of the fire element. The entire Canto 3 is dedicated to the praise of the Sun God as the essence of life, and Sun is the celestial pitcher of fire element which burns eternally inside it.

The 'fire' has immense importance in metaphysics and it is a symbol of life and consciousness. Without 'fire' everything is deemed to be dead and gone.

The *importance* of the sacred Fire and its metaphysical angle has been explained elaborately by Yam, the god of death, to Nachiketa in Kathvalli Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, Valli 1, verse nos. 13-18.

The Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2 says that these sacred fires represent the three letters of the Mantra OM. The first fire called the Garhyapatya Agni represents the first letter 'A', the second fire called

the Dakshinagni represents the second letter 'U', and the third fire called the Ahawaniya Agni represents the third letter 'M'.

The Garbha Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its paragraph no. 5 describes the following three types of fires—*Gyanagni, Darshanagni and Jatharaagni*.

Amongst these three forms of fires, Jathraagni is one that digests anything that is eaten, drunk, licked or sucked. Darshanagni is one which enables one to see things. And Gyanagni is the one which helps to discriminate between what is good deed and what is not. The divine 'fire' has three other forms also. Their locations in the body are as follows—the 'Ahavaniya' fire resides in the mouth, the 'Garhyapatya' fire lives in the abdomen, and the 'Dakshinagni' has its abode in the heart."

According to some texts, the fire element has *three* legendary forms—viz. the 'Agni', which is the terrestrial fire on earth represented by the word Bhu, the 'Jatvedas*', which is the fire of the sky represented by the word Bhuvaha, and 'Vaishwanar[#]', which is the fire of the heavens represented by the word Swaha (Brihaddevtakaar, 1/67). The term appears in the Rig Veda approx. sixty times and is more often than not synonymous with both life as well as the fire element.

*The *Jatveda Fire* is the cosmic all-pervading Fire element that is uniformly and universally present wherever there is sky element or open space. It is represented by the word Bhuvaha.

Jatvedas is the name of the Sun God as well as the Fire God. The Sun is indeed the most evident form of the fire element and possesses all the virtues and qualities of the latter. When two pieces of wooden drills known as *Arani* are rubbed together vigorously, they produce fire though prior to this rubbing no fire was visibly there. This rubbing is symbolic of the Tapa done by Brahm at the beginning of the creation to create the energy needed to initiate the process of creation which is represented by the latent fire element or its personified subtle form as the Fire God who is invisible. The more gross form of this fire element and the visible aspect of the Fire God is the celestial Sun. It has been explained by Yam, the death God, to Nachiketa in Kathvalli or Katho-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its Canto 2, Valli 1, verse no. 8.

[#]The same Upanishad, in its Canto 1, Valli 1, verse no. 7 describes the Vaishwanar Agni.

The Kath Rudra Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse no. 3 prescribes that a man should establish the *three sacred fires* such as the Grihapatya, Dakshinagni and Ahawaniya in his own self at the time of taking the vows of Sanyas and moving out of the house.

The Fire God known as *Agni* refers to the legendary 'fire element', and it finds very prominent place in the scriptures. The Fire God or *Agni* appears in the Vedas as follows—Rig Veda—1/1; 1/12; 4/5; 5/1; 6/7-9; 7/1, 3-6; 12-13; 8/1, 23, 39; 10/1-7; 12/1-122 etc.; in Sam Veda—1-51; 53-55 etc.; in Yajur Veda—1/5; 2/4; 7/24; 18/72 etc.; and in Atharva Veda—6/119; 8/3; 12/3.

Since it was the first born amongst the various Gods, it was called 'Agni' meaning the one who comes first, that which precedes others. It is the inherent 'fire' element present in all the living creatures that distinguish them from non-living creatures. It is all-pervading and omnipresent, and infuses life to all the creatures (Kaushitaki Brahmin, 4/3; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahman 9, verse no.1). This fire helps in digestion of food (Shatpath Brahman, 148/10/1).

He is the foremost amongst the Gods worshipped on earth (Shatpath Brahman, 6/1/11). He is compared to the Sun in the heavens. He has 7 tongues representing the 7 colours of the rays of the Sun or the colours of light (Rig Veda, 1/146/1; 3/6/2). Since he provides nourishment to the Gods by accepting the offerings made to the sacrificial fire at the time of fire sacrifices, he is deemed to be their sustainer and father (Rig Veda,

1/69/1). Other names of the Fire God called Agni or Agne are the following—Vishwavedus, Kavi, Kavikratu, Jaatvedus, Vaishwaanar, Tanunpat, Matrishwa and Naraashansa. It is believed that he was born from the mouth of the Virrat Purush (Rig Veda 10/90/13).

The Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse no. 38 says that Agni or the Fire God is one of the ten Digpaals or custodians of the ten directions of the celestial globe. He is the patron deity of the south-eastern direction and worshipped in that corner. Verse no. 39 says that his weapon is known as Shakti—i.e. dynamism, energy, vigour, vitality and strength.]

21. To remain deeply engrossed in the thoughts of the pure consciousness which is the true 'self' of the spiritual seeker, and meditating upon it to the exclusion of all other things, is known as the Turiya state of existence. This is therefore the transcendental state of existence of the creature.

If the inner-self is likened to the Sun, the esoteric and mystical entity that lends this Sun its power to give brilliant light, energy and heat to this world, which gives the Sun its glorious dynamism which not only enables it to be self-sustaining and self-illuminated but also enables it to sustain and illuminate the world around it, is known as 'Hans'.

[In other words, it is the self-illuminated Atma hidden invisibly inside the dark gross body of the creature that inspires the latter to become active and alive; it is the consciousness living inside the body of the living being as the Atma that also lights up the world for him (i.e. enables him to perceive the world around him). This role of the Atma is similar to the eternal fire burning inside the Sun's disc that enables the latter to remain self-illuminate and self-sustaining on the one hand, and sustain and illuminate the world around it on the other hand. This Atma which is self-illuminated, and which lends its 'light' to the creature—i.e. provides the body of the creature with the all-important factor of existence known as the 'consciousness' that translates into 'life' of the creature—is known as Hans.

The Atma is compared to the celestial Sun because the survival of the gross body of a living being depends directly upon the Atma just like the case of the world directly depending upon the Sun for survival. Even as the living world would certainly perish without the Sun, the body, and therefore the very existence of the creature, would perish without the presence of the Atma inside it. Refer verse no. 12.] (21).

22. The fire sacrifices and its various components are like the assets of those who regard Brahm as their only spiritual wealth. This is known as 'Brahm Samppatti', the wealth that is symbolized by the grand spiritual accomplishments that comes with successfully doing various fire sacrifices.

[Refer also to Kanda 2, verse no. 1. Just like a worldly man jealously protects each unit of his material wealth—he would, for instance, fight even for a gram of gold and a small patch of land—those who know that Brahm is the only truthful spiritual wealth or asset in this creation that is worth pursuing and possessing, and that the fire sacrifices are deemed to be a manifestation of this Brahm, or they are the means for attaining Brahm, also are very careful about observing and maintaining the sanctity of the fire sacrifice.

They regard the fire sacrifice as a deemed manifestation of Brahm. One of the many reasons for this eclectic view is that the 'fire' is pure and holy like Brahm, it is self-illuminated like Brahm, and it personifies such glorious elements of creation as dynamism, energy, heat and light, factors which are absolutely essential requirements to not only inject but also maintain life in this creation.

Further, each step of the fire sacrifice represents one or the other of the countless aspects or facets of Brahm, and since the truthful knowledge of Brahm must be holistic and comprehensive to be of any spiritual good for the aspirant, it obviously follows that the fire sacrifice should be done properly and attention should be paid to each of its steps in order to derive full benefits from it. Otherwise, the fire sacrifice would be like a fractured view of Brahm. It is like the case of an orchestra when all the musicians and instruments must be in complete harmony, for one miss-step would result in the whole structure of music come crashing down. There should be zero tolerance for negligence and callousness.

The basic or central point of any fire sacrifice is the 'fire' itself. The 'fire' has the unique and paradoxical quality of being purifying as it burns all impurities which come in contact with it, but it also reduces to ashes anything that tries to play mischief with it, or which attempts to test its abilities. So, while the fire burns all impurities, it cannot burn anything is pure. For instance, the fire cannot burn pure gold, but it burns the impurities present in it.

Likewise, if one were to attain Brahm-hood, he would first have to become spiritually pure and holy from the inside. Any sort of impurities that might be clinging to the Atma would be first burnt before Brahm is realised. The creature who is accustomed to be in the company of numerous worldly attachments that have been clinging to the Atma for generations, and which have had so great an influence upon the Atma that it thinks that it cannot live without them in this world, is expected to first eliminate such spiritual bondages before he can ever hope to become Brahm-realised.

From the point of the fire sacrifice, its spiritual importance is that it helps the man to burn all his spiritual impurities and worldly taints just like gold that is freed from all its impurities if it is put in the fire. Again, if the fire is regarded as being equivalent to Brahm, it follows that meditation and contemplation upon Brahm also helps the spiritual aspirant to get rid of all his spiritual impurities and tainting effects. Once purified of all worldly taints and delusions, the Atma automatically realises the nature of its 'pure self'—which is the 'consciousness', and which is Brahm personified.]

In order to attain Brahm one should devote one's self in meditating upon Hans (i.e. the Atma) empowered by the Pranav Mantra (OM Mantra).

[That is, one should meditate and contemplate upon the pure consciousness by employing the OM Mantra during Yoga practices. This would empower them sufficiently to rise above the mundane, gross and mortal existence, and reach higher echelons of spiritualism by metaphorically riding on the back of the bird Hans or the divine Swan much like the case of one riding an airplane to go high up into the sky.

In Yoga Upanishads it has been described in great detail how the divine word OM is used in meditation to aid the ascetic to concentrate and focus his mind to realise the presence of the consciousness inside his own body. It has also been described how the two letters of the word 'Hans', i.e. 'Ha' and 'Sa', are used to meditate while inhaling and

exhaling breath during the meditation exercise known as Pranayam or breath control. Refer *Dhyān Bindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 24, 61-65.

Therefore, an expert ascetic uses both the Mantras OM and Hans in order to attain success in his spiritual endeavours. While ‘OM’ links him directly to the cosmic vibrations generated by the cosmic Consciousness, ‘Hans’ enlightens him about who the Supreme Being is. This knowledge fills him with a sense of fulfillment and blessedness as it is the culmination of his endeavours; he experiences bliss and ecstasy that comes with self and Brahm realisation—or being acquainted with the ultimate Truth and Reality of creation that eliminates all causes for his spiritual miseries and bondages.] (22).’

23. The Brahm-putra (literally the son of Brahma, here referring to sage Vaalkhilya) once again asked Swayambhu (the self-born creator Brahma)—‘Oh Lord! How many Hans-Sutras (the different variations of the Hans Mantra¹ or its different interpretations) are there, what are their forms, and how do one measure their effectiveness, truthfulness and authority? You are all-knowing, so please be kind to enlighten me about it.’ (23).

[Note—¹The importance of the Hans Mantra has been described in Kanda/Canto 2, verse nos. 1-2 of this Upanishad.]

24. [Brahma replied--] ‘The symbolic Sun (representing the dynamic consciousness called the Atma of which another name is the ‘Hans’) that resides inside the subtle heart of the creature has ninety-six gloriously brilliant and splendid rays emanating from it and radiating out in every direction.

[The Atma is said to live in the subtle sky of the heart. This sky is known as ‘Hridaya Akash’. Just like the celestial Sun, the Atma too shines in this sky, from where it lends its light and vitality to the whole body of the creature which is regarded as a universe in a miniature form just like the Sun lighting up and injecting life in the whole world from its central location in the sky. Again, just like the Sun has rays radiating out from it, the Atma too effuses consciousness in the form of the ninety-six rays. From the perspective of the physical gross body, these represent the main Naadis or nerves and veins in the body that carry life to all the corners of the creature’s body. From the perspective of metaphysical concept of creation they represent the ninety-six Tattwas as outlined in verse no. 14 of this Canto 1.]

The Chit-Sutra that goes out from the nose in a continuous stream (i.e. the breath) also measures ninety-six fingers width in length.

[The term ‘Chit-Sutra’ refers to the breath because it is the symbolic Sutra or ‘thread’ that stitches together the dead entity known as the body and the ‘consciousness or life factors’ known as Chit. When the creature stops to breathe, the body dies, or loses its life. This breath is a continuous stream of vital air known as Pran which is a synonym for ‘life and consciousness’.] (24).

25. The ‘Param Hans’ (i.e. the supreme Consciousness representing Brahm that resides in the body of the creature as his Atma) has its habitat in the region of the body between the left shoulder and the right side of the hip joint. [This is why the sacred thread representing Brahm is always worn by slinging it diagonally across the chest from the left side of the neck, crossing over the abdomen to the right side of the hip joint.]

But the irony is that this esoteric secret is not known to anyone.

[The location of Brahm in this area of the body is very significant because it is here that all the major internal organs of the body which are responsible for its maintenance are located. The Atma or the pure conscious soul is said to have its seat in the subtle space of the heart. This heart is the 'supreme organ' in the body for the practical reason that if the heart stops its function the body would die immediately. While the failure of other organs might not cause immediate death, failure of the heart results in instant death. No other organ of the body, either singly or collectively, would be able to keep the body alive if the heart gives up.

The Atma, being the 'supreme cause of existence', has therefore selected the heart, the 'supreme organ in the body' as explained above, to be its seat in the creature's body just like the Emperor who is seated on the best and the highest throne in the empire.

Above and below this area where the heart is located, no other vital organ is present that may affect the survival of the body. Of course one would argue that the mind and intellect located in the head (the brain) is equally an important a seat for Brahm because it has been said elsewhere in the Upanishads that the head is the seat of Brahm who had entered the body through the Brahm Randhra and enthroned himself in the mind to control the creation from there. This fact is stressed in the Aeiteriya Upanishad of the Rig Veda, Section 1, Canto 3, verse no. 12; and the Paingal Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 11.

But the importance is to understand the fact that the virtues of intelligence, wisdom, enlightenment, erudition and knowledge, as well as the ability to think and discriminate that are characteristic qualities of the mind and the intellect represent the grand attributes of Brahm whose true form is 'Consciousness'. It is this 'Consciousness' that we refer to when we talk of the Atma that resides in the heart. Say, what use are the mind and the intellect for a dead body, a body from which the Atma or 'life' has left?]

(25).

[Note—Besides this verse, there are other Upanishads which also endorse the view that Brahm *resides in the subtle space of the heart* of the creature—refer (i) Atharva Veda's Mundak Upanishad, Mundak 2, Section 1, verse nos. 9-10; Mundak 2, Section 2, verse no. 1, 6; 9; Mundak 3, Section 1, verse no. 7. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Shewtashwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 11.]

26. Those who have obtained access to Amrit (the nectar of Truth; the elixir of bliss and spiritualism) are the only ones who are acquainted with the eternally self-illuminated Hans (in the form of the Atma and Brahm). No one can obtain Mukti (spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation) without sincerely, honestly and truthfully, with dedication and faith, meditate and contemplate upon this Hans (26).

27. Those who wear the sacred consisting of nine coloured strands also wear it as a symbol of Brahm. But merely worshipping the sacred thread as a symbol of Brahm would not make them sufficiently wise, enlightened and self-realised so as to make them aware of the presence of the glorious Brahm in the form of the symbolic brilliant Sun (i.e. the Atma) present inside their own inner-self.

[That is, they worship Brahm in the external world which is fundamentally gross and perishable, and therefore not the truthful form of Brahm. The real Brahm is subtle and sublime, and it imperceptibly resides in the bosom as the pure consciousness known as the Atma. This Atma is as brilliantly self-illuminated, vibrant and dynamic as the

celestial Sun which does not need any external source of light to shine, no external source to remain illuminated, and no external source to produce the fire of which it is an eternal celestial cauldron.] (27).

28. Aditya (the Sun) illuminates the world (i.e. it provides the world its light, life, energy, heat and dynamism). This is why Aditya is worshipped and honoured by wise and erudite persons who seek purity and knowledge.

[The Sun gives 'light' and removes 'darkness'. In other words, it grants knowledge and wisdom by removing the darkness of delusions and ignorance. Since the celestial Sun is employed as a metaphor for Brahm and the Atma, it follows that one meditates and contemplates upon the latter two entities to attain true spiritual knowledge and enlightenment that would remove one's darkness caused by worldly delusions, and which is the cause of all his fears and perplexities.] (28).

29. The Vajpaye Yagya¹ is the eliminator of animal-like despicable, mean, lowly, pervert and sinful instincts and negative qualities in the creature that pollute or corrupt his inner-self and are denigrating, demeaning and entangling for him. In this eclectic sense it is also the Pashuharta Yagya, literally meaning one in which animals are sacrificed (like the case of the Ashwa Medh Yagya when a horse is sacrificed)².

There is an Adhvaryu priest, and Indra (the king of Gods) is the Devta (the patron deity) of this fire sacrifice known as the Vajpaye Yagya when it is done externally in the physical world.

But when the same Vajpaye Yagya is done internally it is called a 'Dharma Yagya' (a fire sacrifice that strictly conforms to the principles of auspiciousness and righteousness) as it does not entail any killing or bloodshed or violence or pain to any creature, and therefore is most holy and pure form of sacrifice which does not leave any evil consequences (arising from killing of animals during fire sacrifices) in its wake. In this case, the Adhvaryu priest is the Param-Hans (the supremely pure and untainted Atma, the pure conscious 'self' of the worshipper) and the Devta is Pashupati Parmatma (the supreme Lord who controls all the living beings in this creation; the supreme transcendental Brahm)³.

[The Lord is especially honoured by the epithet of 'Pashupati' because an enlightened worshipper targets all his spiritual endeavours towards attaining high levels of purity and holiness that entails that he first controls his basic animal-like natural instincts; he is expected to have completely exercised total self-restraint on his sense organs. Brahm is not sitting somewhere high up in the sky in an imaginary heaven, but the Lord resides inside one's own inner-self as his Atma. This Atma is the Lord of the creature. So when a worshipper pays his obeisance to 'Pashupati Parmatma', he is actually honouring the Atma which has learnt to practice exemplary self-control over one's natural animal-like instincts, characters, qualities and behaviour that are integral to all living beings, but which need to be overcome if the living being intends to find Mukti (freedom) in the real sense. Till this happens, he is virtually enslaved to these negative traits in his character which act as impediments in his spiritual upliftment and welfare.

In this context it would be pertinent to note that 'Indra' is not some God living high up in the heaven, but the term is a metaphor for the Authority that controls all the 'Indris' (the sense organs) of the body. Therefore, Indra is also another name for the

Atma and Brahm, but to that aspect of the latter which is indulgent in the world. This fact is depicted in the character of Indra who is shown in the Purans as a passionate, lustful and jealous God who prefers material creature comforts and pleasures of the sense organs, rather than spiritual wisdom, enlightenment and bliss.] (29).

[Note—¹The *Vajpaye Yagya*—This is performed by one who desires unlimited dominion. This sacrifice had many special features and the number 17 plays a dominant role—for there are 17 animals that are sacrificed, 17 objects are distributed as fees for the priests, and it lasts for 17 days culminating in a chariot race in which the patron who does the fire sacrifice is made to win at any cost.

²The word ‘Pashu-harta’ has two parts—viz. ‘Pashu’ meaning an animal, and ‘Harta’ meaning to steal, remove, eliminate or dispossess. The acquisition of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment eliminates all animal-like instincts in a man. It brings out the shine and brilliance that is inherent in his Atma, the pure consciousness that resides in the body as the man’s ‘true self’. Hence, the endeavour that helps a man achieve this goal in life is called the ‘Pashuharta Yagya’.

³Animals were invariably sacrificed as part of the fire sacrifice ritual. This Upanishad strongly speaks against this practice by emphasizing the point that the actual benefit of a sacrifice is one’s own elevation from a lowly life that is no better than the one led by animals to a life befitting a human being who occupies the highest rung in the ladder of evolution and from whom auspicious virtues are expected by the virtue of his exalted stature in the hierarchy of creation. The human occupies the same position in the scheme of things that is occupied by an emperor, and therefore he is expected to behave and think nobly, righteously and auspiciously. In other words, the true benefit of doing a fire sacrifice is to kindle self-realisation, enlightenment and wisdom in a man whose Atma is unfortunately mired by the numerous faults and blemishes so characteristic, and almost unavoidable, when the Atma assumes a gross body that has to interact with a world which is equally gross. The true benefit of a fire sacrifice is to provide this Atma its final liberation and deliverance from the shackle that unfortunately binds it to this body as well as the world, a situation that has resulted in the Atma hitherto remaining trapped in a cycle of birth and death. The sacred and purifying fire of a sacrifice is expected to burn all the spiritual impurities and bring out the immaculacy in a creature, and if it fails to do so then spilling innocent blood of others (animals) would serve no purpose.

Sacrificing an innocent and helpless creature to satisfy one’s selfish desires can never, repeat *never*, please the Lord on any count. It is virtually murder on the pretext of religion and rituals. This is why the Upanishads are regarded as so great and refined as they have no hesitation in speaking the truth and deriding unethical practices even though such practices had become a part of tradition and observed without asking questions.]

30. The divine and holy super transcendental Divinity known as ‘Brahm’ which is the subject matter of exposition, elucidation and discussion in the Upanishads, and which is espoused by the Vedas and the Upanishads as the ultimate Absolute Truth of creation, is the one which is the main focus of self-study, contemplation and research by those who are sincere to know about Brahm (i.e. by those who truly wish to obtain wisdom, enlightenment and spiritual salvation, those who wish to break free from the fetters of ignorance and delusions, those who wish not to enter the cycle of birth and death in this world, and those who wish to obtain the nectar of eternal bliss and its accompanying ecstasy) (30).

31. The actual implementation of the advice given for realisation of Brahm, the actual acquisition of wisdom, enlightenment and knowledge that leads to Brahm (as outlined in this Upanishad) is the symbolic form of the Ashwmedh Yagya¹ (the horse sacrifice).

By strictly following the tenets and philosophies that pertain to the actual truth of Brahm entitles and helps the seeker of Brahm to attain his objective successfully (i.e. to become Brahm-realised).

All the forms of Brahm Yagyas (i.e. spiritual enterprises that lead to realisation of Brahm, the supreme spiritual Truth) described in this Upanishad are equally effective in bestowing Mukti (liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation) to the creature.

[In other words, the main aim of a spiritual aspirant should be to become 'Truth-realised', which translates into being 'self and Brahm realised'. Towards this end the Upanishads prescribe a number of paths, leaving it upon the seeker of this Truth to select the path best suited to him. The reason for the variety of path espoused in the Upanishads is because the latter realise that in practical terms no two individuals are alike just like no two patients having the same broad symptoms of any disease are alike.

To treat a patient in a holistic manner, an equal holistic approach is needed, and such approach is therefore specific to that individual. It ought to be noted here that this precisely is the approach in the field of Homeopathic system of treatment of a disease. Once a patient is treated in a comprehensive manner, there is no chance of the disease getting relapsed, and the prescribed medicine also has the least chance of adverse reaction.

Since no two situations and individuals are exactly alike, the spiritual path that would suit one would obviously not be the optimum one for the other. This is why the scriptures prescribe different and varying paths, but they all lead to one goal. The importance for a traveler is to reach his destination, and the vehicle that is used is of the least importance once the destination is reached. It is also like the case of doctor prescribing different set of medicines to different patients though their external symptoms may be the same.] (31)."

[Note—¹The *Ashwamedh Yagya*—This is called the horse sacrifice because a horse is sacrificed in it. It is most ancient sacrifice and can be successfully done by very powerful kings or emperors. The horse is let free to go anywhere it wants for one year and the land where it sets foot is either annexed by treaties or by force in war. The actual sacrifice is though for only three days. The sacrificial horse is protected by the army and if by chance it is killed by the opposing king then the sacrifice is deemed to be defiled. In practical terms, it was a means to spread a king's area of influence.]

32. Brahm Putra (i.e. sage Vaalkhilya) exclaimed—"The knowledge related to Hans has been revealed to me."

When he thus proclaimed, Swayambhu (i.e. Brahma) disappeared from sight.

One must understand that the knowledge of the self-illuminated 'Hans' that has been revealed in this Upanishad deals with the eclectic and the divine knowledge of the pure cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma as well as Brahm.

This 'Hans' is also revealed in the form of Lord Rudra (Lord Shiva), who is also known as Lord Pashupati¹.

It is this Brahm that is represented by Pranav, the cosmic ethereal sound encapsulated in the word Mantra OM. It is this Pranav representing Brahm that provides one with liberation and deliverance from this mortal gross world (32).

[Note—¹Lord Shiva who has full control over his sense organs and their inherent animal-like instincts and behaviour—because he is a highly self-realised and enlightened deity who is chosen by exalted ascetics and spiritual aspirants as their patron God—is known as Pashupati, literally the Lord of animals. Since Lord Shiva tolerates no nonsense and ruthlessly overcomes the wayward tendencies of the sense organs and the mind, showing anger at them for their natural grossness and tendency to commit mischief and misdeeds, he is also known as ‘Rudra’, the angry one. Lord Shiva is uncompromising and unrelenting in his pursuit of immaculacy, purity, auspiciousness, righteousness, nobility, probity and propriety, and hence called Rudra, the angry God.

‘Rudra’ has zero tolerance for impertinence, mischief and nonsense. ‘Shiva’ is, on the other hand, calm, tolerant and forgiving. Shiva always remains in a state of meditation and contemplation, a state that is depicted in his posture of blissfulness and half-closed eyes. Rudra, on the other hand, spews fire and brimstone. While Shiva symbolizes the virtues of Brahm marked by blissfulness, tranquility, calmness, wisdom, enlightenment, self-awareness and contentedness, Rudra represents the qualities of dynamism, vitality, vigour, strength and energy present in Brahm.

The question arises ‘why did Shiva become Rudra (angry)?’ The answer is that when Shiva found that his sense organs and mind did not allow him the peace that he sought by meditation and contemplation upon the ‘Atma, the self’, he became angry over them, and severely took them to task—i.e. he became ‘Rudra’ or angry. It is like the case of a teacher who is of a very calm nature and loves his students like they were his own sons, but when he finds that his kindness and loving nature is being misused by the students who create ruckus in the class, he has to become stern and spank them in order to restore discipline and decorum. But that does not mean that he is cruel or wishes to harm his students in the least. This same thing applies to Shiva.

Shiva becomes Rudra in order to ruthlessly punish the creatures of this creation who behave like savages or animals. This is necessary for him as he is the Supreme Being who has the mandate to maintain order and balance in this creation, and he would be failing in his moral duties and obligations if he tries to maintain a false exterior of calmness when his interior is agitated by the upheaval all around. The Supreme Being that Shiva is has an obligation to uphold positive traits and the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety in this creation even if it means that his own image of being calm and forgiving is questioned and overshadowed by anger and vehemence.

Just as the case of severe and malignant diseases like cancer and tuberculosis requiring an equally strong medicine, the evil, pervert and demonic forces of creation require an equally strong antidote to be overcome.

Therefore, that aspect of Brahm, the Supreme Being, which helps the Jiva (the living beings of this creation) control evil tendencies and negativity which make him animal-like is known as ‘Pashupat Brahm’, and the effort that a Jiva makes to achieve this eclectic goal is known as ‘Pashu-harta Yagya’.]

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Uttar Kanda/Canto 2

1. The Japa (repetition) of the Hans Mantra is equivalent to doing Japa of Brahm because this word is a letter form (word form) of Brahm. Brahm-realisation is inspired by it.

Brahm is the Parmatma (the supreme Atma, the Supreme Being) and the Purush (the primal Male; the cosmic Viraat Purush which is the invisible macrocosmic all-pervading sublime form of Brahm from whom the entire creation is revealed).

Brahm is fully endowed with grand spiritual virtues and magnificent divine glories that are compositely called ‘Brahm Sampatti’, the assets of Brahm. [Refer also to Kanda 1, verse no. 22.] (1).

[Note—The grand virtues of Brahm have been expounded in nearly all the Upanishads, some of them being the following—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 15-19, Canto 3, verse nos. 17-22; *Kathrudra Upanishad*, verse no. 12, 27-28, 30-31, 42; *Taittiriya Upanishad* Valli 3, Anuvak 10, verse no. 2-5; *Skanda Upanishad*, verse no. 13; *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 4; *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 16, 20-21, 26, 29; Canto 3, verse no. 2; and Canto 4, verse nos. 31-32; *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 35; *Saraswati Upanishad*, verse no. 50-52; *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*.

(b) Atharva Veda’s = *Mundak Upanishad*, Mundak 1, section 1, verse no. 6; Mundak 2, section 2, verse no. 7, 9-11; Mundak 3, section 1, verse no. 3-5, 7-9; *Atharvashir Upanishad*, Kandika 4 (full); *Naradparivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 8 which is fully dedicated to enumerating the grand virtues of Brahm; Canto 9, verse nos. 3, 19-22; *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph 4, Canto 4, paragraph no. 1; *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 2, section 1, verse nos. 2-5, and Canto 3, section 1, verse nos. 1-8, 11-14; *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 27-31, 33, 67; Canto 4, verse nos. 35-38, 67; Canto 5, verse nos. 10, 20-21, 66-67, 72, 113; *Atma Upanishad*, verse nos. 1-D and 1-E, verse nos. 2-4, 9, 30-31; *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 11, 13-16; Canto 2, verse nos. 13-16, 26, 28-30, 44; *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 6, 8-9, 16-17, 22; *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 7.

(c) Shukla Yajur Veda’s following Upanishads—*Adhyatma Upanishad*, verse nos. 61-64; *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* Canto 2, Brahman 3 describes this Brahm’s two forms in detail.

(d) Sam Veda’s *Chandogya Upanishad*, *Keno Upanishad* and *Avyakta Upanishad*.

The uniformity and non-duality between *Shiva and Brahm* has been emphasized in—

(i) Krishna Yajur Veda’s *Dakshin Murti* or *Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad*, *Pancha Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 30, *Skanda Upanishad*, verse nos. 9, 13, and *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 32. (ii) Atharva Veda’s *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 3, section 2, verse nos. 11-15; *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 11, 32.]

2. When a man has become truly self-realised and enlightened about the Atma and its eclectic grand virtues and divine glories, he is deemed to have acquired the knowledge of Brahm. Such a wise and enlightened man is equivalent to Brahm; he becomes an image of Brahm; he becomes one like Brahm. What more is to be said in this matter, for there is no doubt in it.

[That is, once a man becomes truly self-realised in as much as he has realised the presence of the Atma, the pure consciousness, in his inner-self as his true identity known as the ‘self’, when he has understood that this Atma is the same consciousness that also resides in the rest of the creation as the all-pervading cosmic Consciousness, and that this Consciousness is known as Brahm—it is then that he realises that ‘he’ is not the physical gross body with its limitations but the eternal and infinite ‘consciousness’ known as the Atma which represents the supreme transcendental Brahm. This means, he realises that his ‘true self’ is Brahm personified; it does not require any further proof to establish that ‘he’ (i.e. the true ‘self’ of the concerned person) is Brahm himself personified and established in this creation in that form.

When this wisdom dawns on the mental and intellectual horizon of a person, he is deemed to have acquired auspicious and noble characteristics and virtues equivalent to

those possessed by Brahm by the virtue of his becoming self-realised and understanding the truth of the fact that his Atma, which is Brahm personified, is his 'true self'.

In other words, a self-realised and enlightened man is none else but Brahm personified.]

Those who are Gyani (wise, enlightened and realised) spend their precious time in talking and discussing about Brahm, in meditating and contemplating upon Brahm, and in worshipping Brahm.

With due practice, when a uniformity, compatibility, harmony and inseparability is established between the Atma and the Hans, there would be no chance for any external interference arising from the subjects of this mortal mundane world to create any disharmony or friction or dichotomy between the two.

[That is, when the spiritual aspirant is completely submerged and engrossed in meditating upon the Atma using the Mantra 'Hans' as advised in verse no. 1 of the present Kanda no. 2, as well as in verse no. 12-13, 19-20 of Kanda no. 1 previously, all his links with the outside gross world are broken. None of the creatures or material things of the external world are able to disturb him any longer. They are not able to break the link that is established between his own Atma and the supreme Atma known as Brahm through the medium of the 'thread' represented by the Mantra 'Hans'. The fact that this 'Hans' Mantra is like a 'thread' linking the individual soul to Brahm is endorsed in verse nos. 17, 19-20, 26-27 of Kanda no. 1.] (2).

3. When the inner-self resonates with the cosmic sound called Naad (as happens when the ethereal Mantra Pranav or OM is constantly and persistently repeated during the process of Yoga or meditation) so much so that it appears to the practitioner that this Naad is springing forth from his inner-self (like ripples or waves generated in the water of a lake), the Hans (i.e. the Atma) that is experienced and witnessed then implies that the spiritual aspirant has indeed become self-realised and has attained spiritual enlightenment.

[That is, when the aspirant is drowned in the vibrations created by doing Japa with the Pranav Mantra dedicated to Brahm, i.e. the Mantra OM, a time comes when he is able to experience the presence of the Consciousness inside his inner-self. It appears to the practitioner that these vibrations created by doing Japa or repetition of OM originate from a central point in his heart, and then spread out from it to cover each point of his being just like ripples appearing in the water of a lake having their origin at one point but spreading out to its furthest corner. It is then said that he has become self-realised because he has witnessed the presence of the Atma symbolized by the Hans inside his own bosom.

It is easy to visualize this phenomenon. Suppose there is a lake whose surface is absolutely calm and placid. Now suppose there is swan floating on this surface. The bird would breathe, and this process creates a small expansion and contraction of the muscles of the body which each inhalation and exhalation. This in turn produces subtle rhythmic pulsations of the body of the swan which passes on to the water, thereby creating subtle waves on the surface of the otherwise absolutely calm water. When one observes these waves he finds that they have their point of origin at the spot where the swan floats.

In the context of metaphysics, the 'consciousness' residing in the inner self of the creature as his Atma has its abode in the space of the subtle aspect of the heart. It is from here that vibrations of life are generated, and when they begin to resonate in the inner

being of the creature they resemble the cosmic Naad because the creature is an image of the cosmos in a miniature form.

The heart is made to beat by the spark of life known as ‘consciousness’ present in it. The subtle vibrations created by this beating are reinforced by the vibrations created by doing Japa with OM. The energy waves generated by the beating of the heart and the rhythmic chanting of OM reinforce each other, and the two coalesce with each other to gather momentum and energy that leads to a resonating sound that makes it possible for the man engrossed in meditation to hear a reverberating sound that resembles the sound of the cosmic Naad (sound) inside his being. What is primarily a subtle form of sound becomes an overwhelming resonance that virtually drowns the hearer in its reverberating crescendo.]

When one becomes enlightened internally, it is possible to know about the truth of all things externally.

[When one is inherently intelligent and wise, it is easy for him to learn anything in this world, as opposed to a man who is basically stupid, dull, block-head and ill-witted. No matter what great efforts are made to teach him anything, he would just not understand. The same teacher teaches a class of so many students, but out of them some reach the pinnacle of glory and achievement in life while others become complete failures. How can one blame the teacher, for if his teaching was faulty then how is it that some of his students do so excellently well in life in the field of knowledge taught by the teacher?] (3).

4. The eternal blissful world is known and experienced when there is a union of Shiva (Brahm) and Shakti (his dynamic energy).

[When the Atma or the ‘self’ of the ascetic, which is a personification of Brahm as well as the pure consciousness, and therefore symbolized by Shiva, unites with all dynamic factors, known as ‘Shakti’ that are present in the aspirant’s body, such as his vital winds known as Pran that keep the body active and alive, and other such factors that are absolutely necessary not only for survival but also for the wholesome growth, development and well-being of his—it is then that the ascetic witnesses extreme spiritual bliss and contentedness. With the union of Shiva and Shakti, a world of high blissfulness is obtained. The state of existence of consciousness when this happens is equivalent to the Turiya state of transcendental existence. This is the situation at the subtle level of existence.

At the gross level it is said that this physical world has come into being as a result of a union between Shiva representing Brahm as the primal Male, and Shakti which is the dynamic powers of Brahm manifested as the primal Female. Their ‘intercourse’ or union resulted in this creation being conceptualized. Since the world is a ‘conception’, it is imagined, and therefore a conjecture of the imaginative mind. However, the union itself brought Shiva (Brahm) and his dynamic Shakti (cosmic powers) together, and it gave Shiva immense bliss. This fact is reflected in day-to-day life when one feels immensely happy when united with someone very near to him but separated for some time. Since this creation is the result of this union, it gave immense bliss to Shiva (Brahm) as it was his off spring.

A king feels immensely happy, contented and blissful when he is assured of his unrivalled authority and sway over the kingdom. Imagine his precarious situation if this

authority ('Shakti') of his is challenged or snatched away from him by his enemies! A king without his Shakti or power can never find peace and rest, and therefore loses his contentedness and happiness.

Brahm was peaceful, rested, contented and blissful when he was complete and wholesome, when his Shakti was united with him. But when Brahm decided to create this creation he had to utilise his Shakti to give shape to his decision to create. Since the actual 'truth' is that nothing exists except Brahm, so when Shakti had to create a world different from this 'truth', a world which should look different from Brahm, it had to create Maya or delusions. What was the necessity for this delusion? It was necessary because if there was no delusion then whatever existed would be exactly like Brahm, but we find that it is not. Brahm wished to remain aloof from his own creation, and so it necessitated that there must be some distance between this creation and Brahm.

In other words, Shakti had to move away from Brahm. When Brahm realised that Shakti had moved away from the Truth to create the world hallmarked by 'un-truth', it is natural that Brahm got irritated, i.e. he became restless and lost peace. This explains why Brahm known as 'Shiva' became Brahm known as 'Rudra'.

From the perspective of an ascetic, if he remains submerged in meditation and contemplation when he has withdrawn the sense organs and the mind from the external world and focused their attention on his inner self, he has literally withdrawn the Shakti represented by the dynamic powers of these instruments of the body into his inner-self, which is his 'true self' known as the Atma. For him, the world does not exist. His condition is equivalent to Brahm prior to the latter's decision to first create the world and then get involved in its caretaking. On the other hand, if the same ascetic allows his sense organs and the mind to wander towards the external world, his position would be like Brahm after the rolling forward the juggernaut of creation—that is, the ascetic would lose his calm and peace.

In the present context of this Upanishad, it implies that a self-realised ascetic experiences immense bliss when he is able to bring about synchronization between his Atma and his inner-self known as the Anthakaran, along with the latter's various components, such as the Mana (subtle heart and mind), Chitta (mind and sub-conscious), Buddhi (intelligence) and Ahankar (ego), as well as the inherent Varnas (passions and desires) and the Vrittis (inherent character, traits, habits, inclinations and temperaments that define a creature's nature and character).

When this union is effected, both the ascetic's inner world at the subtle level of existence, as well as the outer world at the gross level of existence become blissful for him. No miseries and troubles of the external world ever move him; they never disturb his calmness and composure. Refer the last stanza of verse no. 2 above.]

The three symbolic eyes of Shiva are represented by Naad, Bindu and Kalaa. It is with this eye that Shiva sees this world.

[That is, an enlightened ascetic sees this world through the eyes of wisdom instead of the physical eyes of the gross body. The physical eyes see only gross things and their external features. These eyes are unable to penetrate deep and see the truth hidden behind the external façade. On the other hand, the third eye is the eye of wisdom which helps the ascetic to see this 'truth' just like modern X-rays help us to see behind the skin.

The Naad, Bindu and Kalaa are components of OM. Briefly, the 'Naad' refers to the concave dish-like sign on the symbol of OM; the 'Bindu' is the dot placed just above it at its focal point; and Kalaa is the changing notes of the sound produced by doing Japa with OM.

The light emanating from the third eye of Shiva seems to pulsate like the light of the glow-worm or the waxing and waning phases of the moon. Even as the phases of the moon are called its 'Kalaas', the pulsations of light emanating from the third eye are also called 'Shiva's Kalaas'. It is the same Shiva who uses the third eye to scorch the creation to ashes when he is angry, and to acquire wisdom and enlightenment when he is meditating and contemplating upon the 'self' and the 'truth'.] (4).

5. The Pranav or OM is understood to have a subtle form which is said to have three 'Angas' (parts or units), three 'Shikhas' (peaks, tips, crests), and two or three 'Matras' (vowel sounds, aspects or dimensions)¹.

When OM becomes an inseparable part of the inner-self so much so that its repetition is done automatically with each breath without any special effort, then one becomes enlightened about the secret Atma or the pure consciousness that resides in his inner-self. This realisation also implies that the ascetic is able to see the same Atma everywhere outside in this world.

[This is primarily because OM is a cosmic sound that prevails everywhere in the space of the sky in the form of Naad. In the higher echelons of Yoga, the ascetic realises that OM and the cosmic Consciousness resonate with the same frequency. When he uses OM as a medium for meditation and contemplation, he experiences this cosmic vibration of Naad resonating inside his being. Obviously, when these two forms or aspects of vibrations—viz. the one resonating inside him in the subtle space of inner organs of the body, and the one resonating in the space of the sky outside him—coalesce with each other, they reach a climax, a crescendo, when the ascetic's whole being gets submerged in the waves of ecstasy and thrill generated by the vibrations caused by the sound of the cosmic Naad reverberating throughout his inner being.] (5).

[Note—¹The *three Angas* of Pranav are the three letters of OM, viz. A, U and M.

The *three Shikhas* are the three phases of creation it represents—viz. the origin symbolized by the letter 'A', the expansion of creation till it reaches its zenith symbolized by the letter 'U', and the conclusion of creation symbolized by the letter 'M'.

The three Shikhas may also imply the three primary phases of Yoga, especially Pranayam or breath control when the Mantra OM is usually employed, viz. the Purak or inhalation of breath, Kumbhak or holding the breath inside the body, and Rechak or exhalation.

The *two or three Matras* refer to the two basic states of existence of consciousness, viz. the waking state and the sleeping state. They can be further divided into three stages, viz. the Jagrat or the waking state, the Swapna or the dreaming state, and Sushupta or the deep sleep state.

The sound of OM has two or three Matras depending upon how closely one meditates upon it and hears it. Ordinarily it seems to have only two sound—viz. 'O' and 'M'. But when analyzed closely it is discovered that it consists of three basic sounds which are equivalent to the alphabets 'A', 'U' and 'M'.]

6. A wise, erudite, sagacious and intelligent man is he who would voluntarily strive for and actually acquire the truthful knowledge of Brahm (instead of being prodded to do so

though he is not sincerely interested in it, or becoming contented with some half-baked, distorted and crooked knowledge purporting to be that of Brahm who is the supreme, the divine, the perfect and the immaculate One).

When this holistic knowledge of Brahm is available to him, he himself would be characterized by the virtues of Brahm. [This is because he would realise that his 'true self' is the Atma that is a personification of Brahm. True Brahm-realisation is when the eclectic virtues of Brahm are displayed by the aspirant and reflected in his personality and behaviour so much so that he becomes a living personification of the divine glories of Brahm.]

Those who are an ocean of Gyan (i.e. those who have an abundance of spiritual knowledge and possess the glories virtues of enlightenment) assert that such a Brahm-realised man should always contemplate upon Hans (the Atma) as an image of the Sun (i.e. of the fire element) and Pranav (Brahm). [Refer verse nos. 19-20 of Kanda no. 1. See also note to verse nos. 15-16 of the present Kanda/Canto no. 2 of this Upanishad.]

[That is, they must understand that the Atma is not an ordinary entity but a divine one that possesses the glories, the dynamic powers and energy, and the supreme authority that Brahm possesses. He must understand that his Atma is as brilliantly illuminated and radiant as the celestial Sun and the Fire element, and the Sun itself is a personified form of Brahm—refer Kanda 1, verse nos. 8, 21-22, 24 and 27-28.

Therefore, much like the celestial Sun that lights up the world and gives its illumination and energy to the latter for its survival, the Atma too illuminates the body of the creature by injecting life and consciousness in it. The organs of the body are kept alive and are able to perceive the surrounding world because of the factor of consciousness present inside them. A dead body would not see or feel or hear or smell the world.

The Atma is the pivot or the axle around which the whole wheel of creation rotates or revolves just like the planets revolving around the Sun. If the Atma is removed from this creation, the latter would cease to exist and scatter away just like the planets that would drift away into the endless void of the cosmos and get lost for ever. Just like the Sun that holds all the planets in their pre-determined place in the fathomless and infinite vacuum of space, the Atma keeps the creation in place and prevents its disintegration and dissolution.

Just like a grave humming sound is heard in outer space just above the outer layer of the earth's atmosphere caused by various physical factors, one of them being the magnetic field around the rotating sphere of the earth, the cosmic Consciousness produces a humming sound in the ether that is heard as Naad. Ancient sages and seers heard this sound and called it 'Pranav'. Since only a living entity that has dynamism inherent in it can produce energy that translates into sound, they deduced correctly that Pranav is a synonym for the supreme Brahm.] (6).

7. When one has acquired a holistic knowledge of Brahm (as outlined in this Upanishad), it is only then that he can be rightly called an expert in Gyan or spiritual wisdom, knowledge and enlightenment.

Lord Shiva known as Pashupati is himself a witness of this fact; he exemplifies this fact. [This stanza explains why Shiva is known as Maheshwar and is regarded as a living manifestation of Brahm. This is because Shiva has completely realised Brahm, the

Supreme Being in the form of the pure conscious Atma. Why Brahm is known as 'Pashupati' has already been explained in verse no. 32 of Kanda no. 1.] (7).

8. The Lord (the Supreme Being known as 'Brahm') is the inspirer, commander and regulator of the Mana (emotions, sentiments and functioning of the mind and the heart) of all living beings. This motivates the Mana to get involved in all the sense objects of this material world. It is the inspiration and motivation provided by the Lord which enables the Pran (vital winds) to remain active, and the faculty of speech (voice) to speak words (8).

9-10. It is on the inspiration and command of the Lord that the eyes see things having forms and colours; it is on his orders and empowerment that the ears hear sounds. Similarly, all other sense organs work expressly on his command and are regulated by him. They are inclined to remain engrossed in their respective objects in the external world because the Lord has created them so that the Atma can perceive the beauty, the majestic charm and the magnificence of the creation crafted by the Lord through their medium.

[Since the Atma is a microcosmic personification of Brahm that lives in the gross body of the creature, it follows that it is actually Brahm himself who enjoys the sights of the world created by no one else but him. The Lord plays with his own creation through the medium of the Atma and the gross body of the creature in which this Atma lives!

The different sense organs of perception (such as the eye which sees, the nose that smells, the ears that hear, the tongue that tastes, and the skin that feels and touches), as well as the organs of action (such as the hands that do deeds and receive anything, the legs that take Brahm albeit in the form of the resident Atma to its designated place, the mouth that helps Brahm to speak and eat, the excretory organs that helps Brahm to get rid of waste from its immediate vicinity inside the body, and the genitals that helps Brahm to reproduce the world and help it sustain its own self perpetually) are the instruments employed by Brahm to interact with and sustain the world of his own creation.

But it has been asserted in the Upanishads that the Atma is inherently neutral and dispassionate. So how and why does it get involved in the gross body through the medium of the above organs? The answer is that it is influenced by 'Maya'—the power of delusions. That is, the Jiva (living being) who is deluded and overcome by Maya is the one who gets involved or indulgent in the world, and the Jiva who is wise and enlightened is freed from this fetter. It is Maya that shrouds the Jiva's intellect and mind and makes him behave as if he is ignorant of the Truth though his 'truthful self' happens to the wise and enlightened Atma. This is the great paradox of creation.]

This inclination of the sense organs to be attracted towards their respective objects is due to Maya—i.e. by the dynamic power of Brahm which makes falsehoods appear to be real, thereby making the sense organs think that the objects of the world which they pursue are true and real, and that they would derive true pleasure and joy by being associated with them or being in their company. The sense organs are the instruments that the Atma, as a representative of Brahm residing inside the creature's body, uses to 'see', to interact and to sustain the gross world of material sense objects.

The desire of the creature to swerve towards the sense objects of the world is due to this affect of Maya, and it is not the creature's inherent and natural inclination. [This is

because the true self of the creature is the Atma which is inherently dispassionate and wise. It has no desire for material comforts and pleasures derived from the sense objects of the mortal world. But when Maya intervenes as the spoil-sport, the Atma gets deluded, and thereby it loses its pristine purity and becomes tainted.] (9-10).

11. The ears are dependent upon the Atma or the consciousness that resides inside the gross body. [This is because a dead body from which the Atma has left has the same ear, but it is worthless; it does not hear.] It is the supreme Brahm known as Pahasupati who subtly enters the ear as its faculty of hearing and empowers it to hear.

This is how Shiva—representing all living beings in the form of the truthful ‘self’, the ‘self’ that is as immaculate and holy as Brahm, the ‘self’ that lives in a gross body as its essential factor known as the ‘soul’ or the Atma—is able to hear (11).

12. Similarly, it is the Parmeshwar, the supreme Ishwar or Lord, who enters the Mana and regulates it from within. This is how the Mana is inspired and kept under control. This is also why the natural inclination of the Mana is always towards auspiciousness and righteousness. [Had it not been for the Maya, or the delusion creating power of Brahm, which makes the Mana, or the subtle heart, the subtle mind and sub-conscious, lose its sense of propriety, probity and bearing, the Mana would always have been immaculate and untainted.] (12).

13. [Verse nos. 13-16 emphasize the fact that Brahm is such an esoteric, mystical and enigmatic entity that logics, rationality, proofs, and application of mind and intelligence cannot help one to realise it. Brahm is beyond the grasp of any of the sense perceptions.]

The Supreme Being known as Maheshwar, the Great Lord, is the one who not only injects life into all the sense organs of the creature’s body, but also sustains their activities besides exercising full control over them. But this Great Lord is not what is described or imagined to be (as he is beyond comprehension, and therefore beyond the purview of description) (13).

14. It is the Maheshwar that gives all the organs their shape, abilities and powers according to his desire, and in the way he wants them to act or perform specific functions to suit his cosmic plan. He also commands and controls them.

Therefore, none of the sense organs such as the eye, the mind, the organ of speech etc. can attain the same exalted stature as that possessed by their Lord. [For instance, no minister of an Emperor can claim the same stature and power as that possessed by the sovereign himself.]

None of the sense organs can ever match the natural and inherent in-built ability to act and inspire action in others as that possessed by their Lord who makes them act in accordance to his will, and strictly in line with his inspirations. [That is, left on their accord, none of the sense organs can do anything—e.g. the eye would not be able to see anything by its own. For instance, a dead man’s eye does not see anything though it is wide open. Hence, the divine entity or the quintessential factor or element that is responsible for all the organs functioning in the way they do is known as the Atma which is pure consciousness residing in the body of the creature. It is this Atma that is the ‘driver’ of all the organs and the ‘controller’ of all their functions.] (14).

15-16. A wise person who has realised that the Maheswar (Brahm) is an entity that is beyond the grasp of any of the sense perceptions of the gross body as well as the various faculties of the subtle mind-intellect complex, should discard taking recourse to rationality, logics and proofs to realise Brahm. Instead, he should concentrate on realizing Brahm by the medium of his inner-self—i.e. by contemplation and meditation, by turning inwards and focusing his attention on the pure consciousness that is self-illuminated and which resides in his bosom, rather than searching for Brahm in the external world. It is only then that he can attain true knowledge of Brahm, or become truly ‘Brahm-realised, wise and enlightened’.

It is the Atma that is self-illuminated, while the external world of Maya (or the world generated by delusions of the mind) is enveloped in darkness. Whereas the Atma is an embodiment of light and enlightenment, Maya on the other hand stands for darkness, delusions and ignorance.

[In other words, when a spiritual aspirant turns inwards in search of the ‘Great Truth’, he discovers an entity that is self-illuminated, radiant and glorious as the celestial Sun. This is the Atma. Like the Sun that can be said to be the virtual Lord of the solar system, this Atma is also the Lord of the microcosm known as the Jiva, the living being. Microcosm exists because there is a ‘macrocosm’; one logically proves the existence of the other. For instance, if there is a day then there must be a night, and vice-versa. So, if the Atma is a Lord of the Jiva, its macrocosmic counterpart would naturally be the Lord of the whole existence at the cosmic plane. The latter aspect of the omnipresent, ubiquitous, all-pervading, immutable and immanent Atma is therefore called ‘Maheshwar’, the supreme Lord the seeker was searching for when he had set out to find the truthful Lord of creation who is the ultimate and the supreme Authority. This Lord is known as Brahm, the Supreme Being.

Since the Atma is a representative of this Supreme Being residing in the inner-being of all the creatures, it follows that it is also Maheshwar. It is like the case of the same sky being assigned two different names of Ghata-Kash and Maha-kash by the virtue of the sky’s (‘Akash’) location inside the body of a hollow pitcher (‘Ghat’) and outside it respectively.

The Atma is like the flame of a lantern or a candle. This flame itself is self-illuminated, splendorous and a brilliant source of light; this flame illuminates the surrounding world by its light. Sans this flame, the surrounding area would be in pitch darkness. Similarly, the world would be enveloped in a thick veil of darkness if the Atma—the living factor of life known as the ‘consciousness’—were not present in it. To draw a parallel from the physical world, the latter would be a sea of darkness if there was no Sun to light it up.

From the metaphysical point of view, the outside world is dark because it is the creation of Maya—the power of this Maheshwar to willfully create a veil of delusions around himself. Why would the Maheshwar do so is answered in verse no. 1 of Kanda/Canto 1.

By corollary, Maya can be removed by its own creator. The clue to the creation of Maya is with the Maheshwar (Atma at the micro level, and Brahm at the macro level of creation), and therefore it is the Maheshwar himself who can dismantle it. This simply means that Maya can be overcome by the Atma itself should it decide to do so, and hence

it also follows that the Jiva, the living being, is himself to blame for the shroud of delusions that he has weaved around himself because this Jiva's truthful 'self' is the Atma.

The colourful world of fascinating charm and variety that is observed is actually a tapestry of delusions that the Maheshwar has created himself.] (15-16).

[Note—Earlier it has been said in Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 6, as well as in Kanda/Canto 1, verse nos. 21, 24, 28 etc. that the Atma, known as the Hans, is like the Sun and the Pranav. The 'Sun' is the only self-illuminated body in the whole of the solar system. Space voyages in modern times has established beyond doubt that the outer space is completely dark. The sky that we see as lighted from earth during the daytime is actually due to refraction of sunlight from the uncountable impurities present in the atmosphere of the earth. But just outside the upper surface of the earth's atmosphere, in the bottom-less vacuum of the outer space, the sky is absolute dark even though the same Sun is shining at the same place as before.

The other word 'Pranav' refers to the background sound in the cosmic space. Science has shown that there are a number of factors for this cosmic humming, such as the magnetic field around the revolving planets, ionized solar wind blowing in outer space, and other physical factors. It has been observed that a grave humming sound is heard just outside the earth's outer atmosphere which makes it appear that the earth is groaning as it slowly revolves around its axis. We do not hear this sound on earth because of the surrounding pollution created by terrestrial noise, but since there is absolute quiet in outer space this subtle sound becomes stark against the all-pervading calmness.

Now we come to 'Brahm'. The term Brahm applies to 'everything', without exception, that exists in this creation, and obviously therefore both the noise and the quietude come within the ambit of 'Brahm' as do the Sun and the Pranav! In other words, the Sun and the Pranav are one or the other aspects or facets of the ubiquitous Brahm. This is the picture at the cosmic plane of existence.

The void of the space has no life par-se, so the mysterious entity, which we like to call the inexplicable forces of Nature, that keeps the hanging celestial bodies in their fixed place in the universe, that keeps the Sun burning eternally without any replenishment in its stock of fuel, which creates sound from nowhere, which created the elements from nothing—is known as Brahm. Since something that has no life, vitality and dynamism in it cannot produce any other thing—dead entities don't create—it follows that this Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness that is regarded as the seed of life and creation. This is the rough picture at the cosmic level of creation.

At the microcosmic plane, this Brahm is revealed as the 'consciousness', the essential life-infusing spark, that resides inside the gross body of the creature who represents the creation in a miniature form. This 'consciousness' is called the Atma as it is the most fundamental and basic entity without which the creature's very existence as a 'living being' known as the Jiva would be questioned and jeopardized. The word 'Atma' means 'the soul, the essence, the basis, the fundamental, the principal and the elementary form' of anything.

Since the Atma not only lights up the inner being of the body with the light of life and consciousness but is also self-sustaining and self-illuminated, it is likened to the celestial Sun. Again, since the dead and the inane entity known as the body gets its power to live by the beating of the heart, the beating which creates a subtle thumping sound as well as a silent humming or whispering as the blood flows through the blood-vessels inside the body, the Atma is also likened to the Pranav, the cosmic background sound.

Elsewhere it is said in the Upanishads that the Sun is a visible manifestation of Brahm because the latter represents the brilliance and magnificence of the glories of

Brahm. In this context, refer to the *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, paragraph no. 4. The *Surya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 3 asserts that all forms of life on earth depend upon the Sun God. The *Narayan Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 1 says that he was born from Lord Narayan, i.e. Lord Vishnu. The same thing is asserted in *Brahmo-panishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 1 which states that Aditya, the Sun God, is a manifestation of Lord Vishnu. But this is understandable because Vishnu and the Viraat Purush is the same Lord having different names according to the degree of subtlety and the scriptural text one is referring to; both are synonymously used. Whereas the Viraat Purush was the macrocosmic gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahm that appeared in the first stage of creation when Brahm decided to initiate it, he was called Vishnu at a little later stage when the visible creation was just about to be initiated, because it is from Vishnu that Brahma the creator was born who later gave shape to the creation itself.

Brahm in metaphysical context refers to the *pure consciousness* that has two levels of existence—one is the macro level, and the other is the micro level. At the macro level this refers to the cosmic Consciousness that is universal and uniform throughout this creation, and this fact that the cosmic Consciousness is the Supreme Being himself personified is endorsed in the Atharva Veda's *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 56. At the micro level of creation, the term 'consciousness' refers to the individual's Atma, his soul. This Atma is his truthful 'self'.

In the context of the present verse of our Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, it is stunning to note that the Sun that is so blazingly splendorous lives in a space of the outer sky filled with overwhelming darkness. This is how the idea of the 'Maheshwar being surrounded by darkness of Maya' originated!

It ought to be noted here that inspite of this all-engulfing darkness in outer space, the Sun continues to shine brilliantly, and any object that is turned towards the Sun too gets illuminated. In other words, inspite of the world being submerged in the delusions created by Maya, those who turn towards the 'truthful Brahm' get enlightenment and wisdom inspite of all odds stacked against them. But if they turn their back towards Brahm, they would see only miseries and insurmountable problems of life instead of hope and salvation!]

17-18. There is never a similarity between the self-evident and cognizable Atma, and the illusionary and deluding Maya.

It is well known and established by doing self research, applying of logic, contemplating and pondering deeply, separating fact from fiction, intelligent analysis and wise derivation of the truth that the supreme Atma, which is consciousness and self-illuminated, has nothing to do with Maya at all.

The debates about the truthfulness or otherwise of anything in this gross material world of sense objects that are marked by delusions are limited to the world. Such debates are the subject matters revolving around Vidya (knowledge, skill and expertise in any given subject) or A-vidya (the opposite of Vidya). It has no bearing on the Atma which is beyond the purview and jurisdiction of either the Vidya or the A-vidya for the simple reason that the Atma is an ethereal entity that transcends the defining boundaries of the gross world (17-18).

[Note—The Jiva, i.e. the living being, is either aware of things in this world or is unaware of them. The state of existence when the Jiva is aware of this world and its objects is known as 'Vidya' or knowledge and awareness, while the opposite would naturally be

‘A-Vidya’ or lack of knowledge and awareness. In the field of spiritualism, knowledge of the truth of the Atma is known as ‘Vidya’, and its lack is ‘A-Vidya’.

Now, since the Atma is said to be eternally self-illuminated and enlightened, to cast doubts on its inherent divinity and greatness as well as its existence comes under the definition of ‘A-Vidya’, while to be sure and convinced of the same is categorized as ‘Vidya’.]

19-20. From the basic or fundamental perspective of the Absolute Truth of creation, such debates are useless and a waste of time and energy. Actually, it is one Truth that is the fundamental Tattwa (essence, basis) of everything in existence.

[Here, ‘Truth’ refers to the Consciousness that pervades in this creation uniformly, and without which nothing would matter or exist. If there was no Consciousness, there would have been no life on Earth, and the world (earth) would be as barren a stretch of terrain as that on the planets Mars or Venus for instance!]

Whatever is visible in this physical world also appears to be ‘true’ because it is perceived first hand, but this ‘truth’ is cloaked in Maya as the instruments of the body which perceive it are themselves veiled in Maya. [Refer verse no. 9-18.]

Therefore, there is a sea of difference between the ‘Truth’ that is ‘absolute’, and the ‘truth’ that is ‘not absolute’ but is rather deluding.

The ‘Absolute Truth’ is a manifestation of or a metaphor for ‘light’ because it is self-evident and self-illuminated.

[It is different from the perceived or imagined ‘truth’ in the form of the world which is illuminated by the light of something else, for instance the light of the Sun. The Sun is self-illuminated and self-sustaining; it does not require anything else to make it shine and give light, or remain burning eternally. On the other hand the world is neither self-illuminated nor self-sustaining—i.e. it is not self-illuminated as it depends upon the light of the Sun to remain illuminated, and it is not self-sustaining as it depends upon the Sun for its heat, light and energy, factors that are absolute essentials for creation to survive.

Similarly, the Atma is self-illuminated and self-sustaining, whereas the body is dependent upon this Atma for its awareness of the world (‘illumination’) as well as its life (‘sustenance’)]

But, at the same time, the fact is that it is the ‘light’ that makes the Truth shine, whether at the cosmic level of the ‘absolute’ or the mundane level of the world which the creature sees with his organs of perception. This ‘light’ is the ‘Consciousness’ known as Brahm at the cosmic level, and the Atma at the individual level of the creature.

Hence, the ‘light’ (of knowledge) is a common denominator at all levels of existence that illuminates the Truth. That is, it is knowledge, wisdom and erudition that highlight the ‘truth’ by eliminating darkness in the form of ignorance of this ‘truth’ resulting in delusions arising out of misinterpretation, misconception, misperception, misinformation etc.

This ‘light’ representing the glorious virtue of knowledge, erudition, wisdom, enlightenment and sagacity that are the unique characteristics of the supreme Consciousness known as Brahm at the micro plane of existence, and as the Atma at the individual level of the creature’s existence is therefore a non-dual or Advaitya virtue. It is uniform and universal in creation (because the virtues of knowledge and wisdom that

stand for 'truth', instead of the ever-changing nature of 'un-truth', always remain steady, unchanging and one—or 'non-dual')

[If we regard the word 'light' as a metaphor for the enlightened Atma, then also the same logic applies, as the 'truthful Atma' is a universal, immutable, immanent and constant factor of creation, an unchallengeable factor without which this creation would lose its meaning and foundation.] (19-20).

21-22. In this way, it is the 'light' (symbolizing the knowledge or awareness of the ubiquitous factor of life known as the consciousness) that is the universal source of illumination (knowledge and wisdom) in this world. [That is, being enlightened about the truth of the Atma as a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness is a spiritually elevating and empowering experience. It not only enlightens the aspirant about the truth of his own 'self' but also illuminates the path of his emancipation and salvation.]

It is wiser and prudent to keep quiet about it instead of speaking something about it (because it cannot be properly and completely described in words, thereby leaving it to be subjected to misinterpretation and misunderstanding, a situation that would be ruinous for the destiny of the hearer). Spiritual truths can only be experienced and witnessed first hand, and not taught or described or illustrated (like some physical experiment in a science laboratory of a college).

A person who is fortunate enough to have voluntarily obtained this eclectic divine knowledge (of Brahm and the Atma) is so unique that he cannot be categorized exclusively as being Brahm (personified divinity), or a Jiva (an ordinary living being), or anyone else in specific terms to the exclusion of others. That is, he is all of them at once; he is the 'non-dual' Brahm personified in his form. [Such a man is deemed to have reached the pinnacle of enlightenment and self-realisation. For him, it is the 'truth' that matters, and the 'truth' is always the same!]

He has no Varna¹ (i.e. he cannot be restricted to any particular class in society), or Ashram² (i.e. he cannot be categorized on the basis of any particular phase of life) (21-22).

[Note—¹The four *Varnas* are Brahmins or the upper learned class, Kshatriyas or the warrior class or noblemen, Vaishyas or the trading community, and Shudras or the working class, especially the labourers.

²The four *Ashrams* are Brahmacharya or the celibate life as a student, Grishatha or a householder, Vaanprastha or when one withdraws from active householder's life and prepares to leave home, perhaps to go for pilgrimage, and Sanyas or total renunciation.]

23-25. Such a spiritually realised man does not fall under the category of either those who obey the laws of Dharma (probity and propriety) or those who do not. Nothing is prohibited for him, nor is anything specially prescribed for him.

When he has developed a holistic view of creation whereby he sees non-duality everywhere in the sense that he sees nothing but Brahm everywhere, there is no question of his having a sense of sorrow or pain in one situation, and of joy and happiness in another situation. [23½.]

Such a highly enlightened and Brahm-realised man does not 'see' this world with its myriad forms and variations, a world which is inhabited by diverse species and types of creatures. This is because he sees or observes or perceives only 'one' (non-dual) Brahm everywhere; he sees only one 'consciousness' (Atma) lighted in this world in so

many varieties and forms. He understands that all that he actually sees in the form of 'life' in this world around him with the gross organ of sight known as the eye is only the external façade which hides the reality of 'truth and consciousness' behind it. He sees nothing but Brahm in the form of this 'consciousness and truth' everywhere.

In this situation, the difference between what is Dharma and what is not do not apply to him (23-25).

26. The Atma which is supreme is characterized by being 'consciousness' that is eternal and steady. It has been in its present form since time immemorial. There are no divisions in this Atma. Any divisions or sub-divisions or forms that may be imagined of it are part of the one single whole known as the Atma, and not separate or distinct from it (26).

27. Whatever thing that exists or does not exist are but a form of Brahm. [That thing which physically exists is visible, and it represents the visible form of Brahm. That thing which is invisible represents the invisible form of Brahm.]

In this situation, a man who is truly Brahm-realised is not expected to either accept or reject anything or situation. [That is, if he sees something, he knows that it is revelation of Brahm in that particular form. If he does not see anything but learns about its presence from other sources, he is convinced that it must be true because it represents the subtle and invisible form or aspect of Brahm.] (27).

28. [Verse nos. 28-30 outline the cosmic formless aspect of Brahm which defies definition¹.]

The supreme transcendental Brahm, the Supreme Being, is the one who is the foundation and basis of all that exists; he establishes everything and everyone in creation.

He has no qualifications and attributes. He is comprehensible by the mind and describable by the faculty of speech. He is invisible to the gross organ of sight known as the eye. He cannot be accepted or grasped or perceived or understood by any means. He has no family lineage or ancestor from whom he can be supposed to have descended. He has no form and shape (28).

[Note—¹The following Upanishads are some of the ones which expound upon the glories and magnificence of Brahm:--

The all-encompassing and all-pervading aspect of Brahm, known as the *Vaishwanar Brahm*, have been described in the following Upanishads: (i) Atharva Veda's = Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 3; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse no. 11. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahma Upanishad, verse no. 21; Pran Agnihotra Upanishad, verse no. 15.

Non-duality or oneness or uniformity between *Brahm and the Atma* has been elaborately explained in all the major Upanishads because this is the basic theme around which the philosophy of the Upanishads is built. Some of these Upanishads are the following—

(i) Krishna Yajur Veda—Brahm Vidya Upanishad, verse nos. 17, 81-110; Tejo Bindu Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-43, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-51, 60-64, Canto 4, verse nos. 2-30, 69-79, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-75, 90-96, Canto 6, verse nos. 1-72; Yogtattva Upanishad, verse nos. 7-8; Skanda Upanishad, verse nos. 2-7; Dhyani Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/15; Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 41-42.

(ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Adhyatma Upanishad; Subalo-panishad, Canto 3, 5, 7 (verse no. 1), and 9 (verse no. 16); Paingalo-panishad, Canto 4, verse no.18; Niralamba.

(c) Rig Veda's Atma-poojo-panishad; Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 5, Brahman 1.

(iii) Atharva Veda's Atmo-panishad; Mundak Upanishad, Canto 3, section 2, verse nos. 3-4, 8; Mandukya Upanishad, verse no. 2; Atharvashir Upanishad (which describes Rudra as a manifestation of Brahm); Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph 4-6; Canto 8, paragraph no. 2; Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 2, verse no. 2-3; Atma Upanishad; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse no. 7; Canto 9, verse nos. 7-8.

(iv) Sam Veda—Maho-panishad, Canto 3, verse no. 7; Keno-panishad; Chandogya Upanishad.

The *eclectic divine virtues* of Brahm have been enumerated in countless Upanishads, for instance in the following—

(a) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Yogshikha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 15-19, Canto 3, verse nos. 17-22; *Kathrudra Upanishad*, verse no. 12, 27-28, 30-31, 42; *Taittiriya Upanishad* Valli 3, Anuvak 10, verse no. 2-5; *Skanda Upanishad*, verse no. 13; *Dhyan Bindu Upanishad*, verse no. 4; *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 2, verse nos. 16, 20-21, 26, 29; Canto 3, verse no. 2; and Canto 4, verse nos. 31-32; *Yog Kundalini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 35; *Saraswati Upanishad*, verse no. 50-52; *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*.

(b) Atharva Veda's = *Mundak Upanishad*, Mundak 1, section 1, verse no. 6; Mundak 2, section 2, verse no. 7, 9-11; Mundak 3, section 1, verse no. 3-5, 7-9; *Atharvashir Upanishad*, Kandika 4 (full); *Naradparivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 8 which is fully dedicated to enumerating the grand virtues of Brahm; Canto 9, verse nos. 3, 19-22; *Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph 4, Canto 4, paragraph no. 1; *Shandilya Upanishad*, Canto 2, section 1, verse nos. 2-5, and Canto 3, section 1, verse nos. 1-8, 11-14; *Annapurna Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 27-31, 33, 67; Canto 4, verse nos. 35-38, 67; Canto 5, verse nos. 10, 20-21, 66-67, 72, 113; *Atma Upanishad*, verse nos. 1-D and 1-E, verse nos. 2-4, 9, 30-31; *Pashupata Brahm Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 11, 13-16; Canto 2, verse nos. 13-16, 26, 28-30, 44; *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 5, verse no. 6, 8-9, 16-17, 22; *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse no. 7.

(c) Shukla Yajur Veda's following Upanishads—*Adhyatma Upanishad*, verse nos. 61-64; *Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad* Canto 2, Brahman 3 describes this Brahm's two forms in detail.

(d) Sam Veda's *Chandogya Upanishad*, *Keno Upanishad* and *Avyakta Upanishad*.

Reconciliation between the concept of duality and non-duality—Atharva Veda's *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 1, verse nos. 8-10.

Atharva Veda's *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad* assigns *various names to Brahm*—viz. Maheshwar Brahm (Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 11), Manas Brahm (Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 11-12), Hans (Kanda/Canto 1, verse nos. 12-15, 20-21, 32), Param Hans (Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 25), Pashupati Parmatma (Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 29), Pashupati or Pashupati Rudra (Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 32); Parmatma and Purush (Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 1).

The entire *creation was produced* by Brahm as the Viraat Purush—refer (i) Rig Veda's *Aiteriya Upanishad*, Canto 1, Section 1-3. (ii) Atharva Veda's *Mundak Upanishad*, Mundak (Canto) 1, section 1, verse no. 1, 7, 9; Mundak 1, section 2, verse no. 1; Mundak 2, section 1, verse nos. 1-10; *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad*, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 9-10. (iii) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Shewatshwatar Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 4.

Brahm *resides in the subtle space of the heart* of the creature—refer (i) Atharva Veda's *Mundak Upanishad*, Mundak 2, Section 1, verse nos. 9-10; Mundak 2, Section 2, verse no. 1, 6; 9; Mundak 3, Section 1, verse no. 7; *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 25. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's *Shewtashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 11.

Brahm *resides in the gross body* of the creature (as its Atma and Pran)—refer (i) Atharva Veda's Mundak Upanishad, Mundak 3, Section 1, verse no. 4-5 (as the creature's Pran); Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 9, verse no. 15; Pashupata Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 17, 19-20; Canto 2, verse nos. 13-16, 21-25, 31-46. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Shewatshwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 7; Panch Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 40; Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 4. (iii) Rig Veda's Aiteriya Upanishad, Canto 1, Section 2, verse no. 3; Canto 1, Section 3, verse no. 12-14.

Brahm is the *controller of the entire creation*—refer (i) Atharva Veda's Mundak Upanishad, Mundak 2, Section 2, verse no. 7. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Shewtashwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 1, 7.

Brahm has *countless mouths, ears, eyes and necks (heads)*—refer (i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Shewtashwatar Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 3, 11, 14, 16. (ii) Atharva Veda's Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 11, and Canto 6, paragraph no. 11. The phrase 'having countless ears' simply means that Brahm, in the form of the Viraat Purush, assumed as many forms as there were creatures who could hear. It also means that Brahm, as the living being's consciousness, heard or became aware of everything that was happening in this creation.

Brahm is *beyond comprehension*—refer Atharva Veda's Pashupata Brahm Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 13-20, 26-30; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 29.

Brahm is *Sat-Chit-Anand*—refer Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 29.

Brahm *encloses this entire creation from all sides*, and nothing exists outside the boundary of Brahm. This fact has been asserted in the *Shwetashwatar Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 3, verse no. 7, 9; Canto 6, verse nos. 2, 9; and in *Gayatri Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, Gopath Brahman, Kandika 38.

The relationship between *Brahm and the world* has been explained in Kathrudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 42.

The uniformity and non-duality between *Shiva and Brahm* has been expounded in—(i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Dakshin Murti or Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad, Pancha Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 30, Skanda Upanishad, verse nos. 9, 13, and Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 32. (ii) Atharva Veda's Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 2, verse nos. 11-15; Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 11, 32.

The *Pran or life consciousness* of all the living beings is *Brahm personified* in that form—refer Mudak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 3, section 1, verse no. 4; Pashupata Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 17, 19-20; Canto 2, verse nos. 13-16, 21-25, 31-46.

The *Pran has its origin in Brahm*—Mundak Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 1, verse no. 3.

The Atharva Veda's Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Kanda/Canto 1, verse nos. 21, 24, 27, and Kanda/Canto 2, verse nos. 6, 15-16 assert that the *Sun and the Pranav (cosmic sound) are metaphors for both the Atma as well as the Brahm*.

The *four Paads*, literally meaning legs or pedestals or aspects of Brahm, have been elaborately described in the following Upanishads—(i) Sam Veda's Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 3, section 18, verse nos. 2-6, Canto 4, Section 5, verse no. 2, Canto 4, Section 6, verse no. 3, Canto 4, Section 7, verse no. 3, and Canto 4, Section 8, verse no. 3. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda's Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 1. (iii) Atharva Veda's Mandukya Upanishad, verse nos. 3-7; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 4-7; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 5-8; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 5; Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 8, verse nos. 9-19; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 5; Canto 4, paragraph nos. 2-3, 6; and Canto 8, paragraph no. 4.

Why *Brahm* or Ishwar, the Supreme Being, the supreme Lord and Authority of creation, had to *become a Jiva* (creature) has been explained in (i) Shukla Yajur Veda's Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2. (ii) Atharva Veda's Pashupata Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12; Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph nos. 9, 11-13.

Brahm is *revealed in the form of the Bhuts* (elements; creatures) and *pervades uniformly* in this creation so much so that nothing is there that is not Brahm—this eclectic fact is highlighted in the Tripura Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse nos. 6, 8-9, 16-17, 22.

The *non-duality of Brahm* has been exemplarily explained in the Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, paragraph no. 2 by citing the example of gold and water.

The Shandilya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, section 1, verse nos. 2-5 narrate the two aspects of Brahm as being *Sakal* and *Nishkal* when sage Shandilya asked sage Atharva about it.

The *various terms used to describe Brahm*, such as Vyasthi Brahm, Samasthi Brahm, Sanhaar Brahm, Srasthi Brahm, Ubhayaatmak Brahm, Baahaya Brahm, Vyavahaarik Brahm, Aarsha Brahm—these have been explained in the Atharva Veda's *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, Canto 8, verse no. 1.

The *various forms of Brahm*—(a) The *five forms* of Brahm called the 'Panch Brahm' have been listed in verse no. 1 and described in detail in verse nos. 5-23 of the Panch Brahm Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda.

(b) The *two forms of Brahm*—There are two names given to the two forms of Brahm, viz. (i) 'Murta' and 'Amurta' which have been described in Shukla Yajur Veda's Advai Tarak Upanishad, verse no. 10; Mandal Brahman Upanishad, Brahman 1, section 3, verse no. 1; and (ii) 'Purva Tarak' and 'Uttar Tarak' which have been described in Shukla Yajur Veda's Mandal Brahman Upanishad, Brahman 1, section 3, verse nos. 1, 3-4.]

29. He (Brahm) has no gross organs such as the eye, ear, hand and leg. He is 'Nitya', i.e. eternal, constant and ever-present.

He is 'Vibhu', i.e. he is the Lord who is almighty, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, magnanimous, eternal, infinite, all-powerful, immovable, constant and immutable.

He is 'Sarwagat', i.e. he can go anywhere he likes and lives everywhere at the same time in the sense that he is omnipresent and all-pervading. Besides this, being a Sarwagat he is also all-knowing by the virtue of his presence everywhere, as nothing remains hidden from him.

He is 'Su-Sukshma', i.e. he is smaller than the smallest, and subtler than the subtlest.

He is 'Avyaya', i.e. he is imperishable, infinite and in-diminishable; he cannot be fractioned or reduced in dimension, importance or in any other way whatsoever. Hence, he is free from death (29).

30. He (Brahm) is present in every instant and in every place at the same time, as he is omnipresent and all-pervading. Therefore, he is present in the front and the rear, as well as in the north and the south—i.e. at the top and the bottom, the front and the back.

He is revealed in the form of the Amrit (nectar; elixir) that drips from the eclectic philosophy of the Vedas. He is an embodiment of extreme bliss, beatitude and felicity that is obtained by imbibing the Amrit (nectar; eclectic spiritual knowledge) of the Vedas.

This eclectic supreme transcendental Brahm, who is an embodiment of 'Brahmanand', i.e. who is a fount of, a treasury of extreme bliss, beatitude and felicity, is present in the 'south' (symbolizing not only the geographical south but also implying the rear, the bottom, the nadir, and the right) as well as in the 'north' (symbolizing not only the geographical north but also implying the front, the top, the zenith and the left) (30).

31. When a wise and enlightened spiritual aspirant develops this holistic and all-incorporating view of Brahm, he begins to see everything in the context of Brahm. Hence, since Brahm is also reflected in his inner-self as his own Atma, he begins to see the entire creation as it is reflected in his Atma. [A wise and self-realised man becomes enlightened enough to see the 'truth' lying hidden behind the veil of delusions in this world. He sees the world as it is; he has developed the high level of wisdom and erudition to sieve through all information so as to separate the grain from the chaff, the truth from the falsehood. Since his Atma has gained its pristine pure form, it is able to reflect the world in its entirety and true form—that is, in the way it actually is just like a clean mirror presents a correct and truthful image of the object viewed in it.]

This all-encompassing and holistic view of Brahm and creation provides equal opportunity to attain Mukti (liberation and deliverance; emancipation and salvation) to the 'Gyanis' (i.e. those persons who are wise, erudite, learned, enlightened etc.) as well as to the 'Agyanis' (i.e. those who are not Gyanis). [That is, if one becomes enlightened enough about the Atma then it does not matter whether or not he has studied the voluminous scriptures or done Yoga. Knowledge of the 'self' is spiritually liberating and emancipating for all, whether the man has formal knowledge of the scriptures or not, whether he has done strenuous meditation exercises or not. In fact, even if he reads the scriptures and does Yoga but does not understand what the Atma is then all his efforts have gone to vain as far as his spiritual liberation and salvation, or his emancipation and salvation are concerned.] (31).

32. This eclectic spiritual achievement that leads to the acquisition of the highest form of knowledge of the supreme Divinity (Brahm and Atma), acquaintance with the 'truth' that is beyond doubt and irreproachable, success in doing Tapa (austerity, penance, strict following of the tenets of the scriptures inspite of odds), implementing Brahmcharya (observance of strict self-control over the sense organs and the wayward inclinations of the mind and heart; following the tenets that lead to Brahm-realisation), and other such grand qualities are obtainable only by following the path shown by Vedanta (the Upanishads) (32).

[Note—The importance of the study of the Upanishads has also been stressed in Krishna Yajur Veda's Yogkundali Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 10-13.]

33. Only those whose inner-self has been thoroughly cleansed of all sorts of blemishes, deficiencies, faults and shortcomings (associated with life in this corrupt mundane world which is thickly embedded with delusions and ignorance), and is thereby rendered holy, untainted and pure, are eligible to realise or receive or accept or see or witness and experience the supreme transcendental Divinity (Brahm) which is self-illuminated.

Those who are covered in a veil of Maya (delusions) cannot ever expect to have a divine sight or view of the supreme Lord (33).

[Note—It is like the case of a man whose eyesight is weak, or who wears spectacles with dirty, tinted or cracked glasses, or whose spectacles do not have correct lenses fitted in them. In any of these situations it is obvious that his view of the world would be affected by these anomalies; the distortion in what he sees, or the defect in the view would be in direct proportion to the type and intensity of the anomaly.]

On the other hand, if he has normal vision in his eyes, or if his weak vision has been corrected by the use of proper spectacles, then his view of the surrounding world would be natural, truthful and correct; it would be devoid of all artificial distortions, and would make him aware of the things as they actually exist.]

34. A wise ascetic who understands the truth of his real 'self' (i.e. of his Atma which is pure consciousness and a personification of Brahm) attains complete fulfillment. He becomes as complete and whole as the Brahm, the Supreme Being, personified in the form of his truthful 'self' known as the Atma. As a consequence, he does not have to fall in the trap symbolized by the endless cycle of birth and death. [That is, when an ascetic attains complete spiritual enlightenment, he obtains Mukti or Moksha, which means he obtains spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. He does not have to take a physical birth in this world again.] (34).

35. Just like the sky that is omnipresent and all-pervading, that is always steady and constant, not moving even the slightest from its present position, neither going anywhere nor coming from anywhere, the wise and self-realised enlightened ascetic who has understood the truth of his own 'self' as a personification of the supreme transcendental cosmic Consciousness and Truth known as 'Brahm' too does not move from his present position, he too does not have to go anywhere (upon death) nor come here from somewhere else (upon a new birth).

[In short, he neither goes to the heaven or hell, nor does he have to come back in this world from either of these two places to take a birth in the higher echelon of existence or being condemned to a lowly existence as a reward or punishment respectively. He is deemed to be eternally freed from the fetters of ignorance and delusions, he is unshackled and freed from the bondage created by the gross view of creation which has a limited horizon.]

Having overcome the delusory effects of ignorance, he is able to reach the citadel of spiritual enlightenment when he becomes one with and inseparable from Brahm, a state of existence which is tantamount to his attaining Mukti or Moksha (freedom and deliverance) from all worldly bondages and spiritual shackles that had acted as fetters for him since time immemorial. That translates into his being eternal and imperishable like Brahm. That implies also that he neither dies nor takes a birth. He does not go to heaven or hell, and neither does he come back to live in a gross body interacting with a gross world. He is beyond such limited conceptions of creation. Like his primary form known as the Atma, which in turn is Brahm personified, he too becomes eternal, imperishable and infinite.] (35).

36. [This verse highlights the importance of eating food obtained by correct or righteous means.]

This exemplary and high degree of equanimity of the mind and thought reflects in his eating preferences when he does not distinguish between what is to be eaten and what

is not to be eaten. [That is, he has conquered his taste buds and the natural urges of the tongue; he has controlled his desire for self-gratification. He eats not because something is tasty, but because it is a sort of offering to the Brahm residing in his inner-self. He treats each morsel of food as an oblation made to the symbolic form of the sacred fire burning inside him.]

This helps him to completely clean the mind and the sub-conscious of all impurities because the holiness and purity of the inner-self is directly dependent upon the type of food ingested. Food obtained by unrighteous means corrupts the mind and the inner-self, while food procured by rightful means cleanses them. So, when the food ingested is made pure and uncorrupt, the Chitta is automatically cleansed and made holy (36).

37. When the Chitta (mind and sub-conscious) is thoroughly cleansed of all impurities, faults, blemishes and shortcomings, it is only then that, on the one hand, Gyan (wisdom, erudition, sagacity, enlightenment, truthful knowledge, ability to distinguish between the right and the wrong) is proportionately enhanced, and on the other hand the numerous difficult knots of Agyan (ignorance and delusions), which are spiritual stumbling blocks for the ascetic, are progressively reduced and ultimately eliminated.

[That is, if one is able to control his mind and sub-conscious he is not only able to increase his treasure of right thoughts and wisdom but also get rid of negativity in the same ratio. His spiritual elevation thereby becomes rapid and easy.]

Therefore, only those who are not yet Brahm-realised lay importance on what to eat and what not to in order to keep themselves holy and clean.

[This statement is an indirect indictment of those who are very fussy in matters of eating only 'religiously sanctified food' that is cleaned and made holy by meaningless formalities and purification rites. Such things may fool the world into believing that the concerned person is very holy, religious and pious as he eats only clean and sanctified food, but such pretensions of holiness and purity would not actually lead to the cleaning of the inner-self of the person who finds one food as 'defiled' and the other as 'sanctified' for artificial and whimsical reasons. This is because he still has not become wise enough to understand that no external situation or thing can ever defile the nourishing quality of food that is inherently present in it, nor would any food become worthy of eating simply because some elaborate ritual was performed by it if the food is not good for the body.

The importance of any food lies in what good it does to the body of the creature who eats the food, what basic ingredients it contains, rather than the food's outer look, its monetary value, or anything else. The body is benefited by the nutrients, such as carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, minerals, other nutritional elements etc. that are inherently present in the food eaten, and not by its external look, texture, colour or dressing.

For a wise and enlightened man the main objective of eating anything is to extract the vital life-sustaining nutrients contained in the food eaten so as to sustain the body in which the Atma representing the Parmatma lives. It is like taking proper care of the shrine in which the deity has been consecrated. It is through a well-nourished and healthy body that the Atma can do good and righteous deeds, study the scriptures so that truthful knowledge can be accessed, and so on and so forth. A weak and decrepit body would make the incumbent Atma suffer like hell instead of living peacefully and comfortably.

Besides this, a truly wise man understands that the sacred fire is burning inside his body in a symbolic manner, being supported by the vital winds called Pran that circulate inside the body. Hence, the food eaten is not to satisfy one's taste buds but for offering oblations to this sacred fire. When food is eaten with this grand notion, the entire exercise of procuring, preparing and eating food becomes tantamount to doing a fire sacrifice in which eatables are offered to the raging fire as offerings meant for the divine Gods. In this case, the God is the Atma itself.

Say, how can any food, no matter how impure or unclean it might be, ever make the raging fire impure and unholy? Everything that is put into the fire is reduced to ashes without any distinction and favour. This is also applicable in the case of the food that is eaten by the man. Whatever variety of food one eats—whether it is delicious or bland, whether it is costly food or a staple and cheap food—all of them are reduced to fecal matter of the same type which must be eliminated at the first opportunity lest it would poison the body.] (37).

38. The reason is that the thoughts and approach to life of a true Gyani (i.e. a Brahm-realised person) is vastly different from one who is Agyani (i.e. who is not self and Brahm realised). A Gyani does not have any kind of thoughts that one thing is better than the other, or that one thing is more useful than its counterpart.

[A Gyani has developed a high degree of equanimity and uniformity of vision and thought. Since he is convinced about the truthfulness and the sacrosanct nature of the great declaration made by the Upanishads and other scriptures regarding the Advaitya (non-dual) nature of the ultimate Absolute Truth that is the actual reality of creation, he knows that whatever exists in creation are all fundamentally the same though their exteriors and characteristics may vary widely and extensively.

The notion of one thing being attractive and the other repulsive, one situation being favourable while the other being unfavourable, one creature being a foe while the other being most dear—all such thoughts and deductions or conclusions made by a living being vis-à-vis the gross world are based on the perception of the latter by the equally gross organs of the gross body. Since the thing perceived and the medium of perception are both gross, the perception would naturally be proportionately gross.

The real 'self' of the wise, enlightened and self-realised man is not the gross body, but it is the Atma which is most sublime and subtle. This Atma is pure consciousness that resides in the physical body.

So, when the focus of what constitutes the 'self' shifts from the gross body to the subtle and sublime Atma, the notion of one thing being good and the other bad becomes redundant. It is the body that abhors certain things or situations in the world because they give pain to its organs, while it longs for others that fulfills its desire for gratification. The Atma is really unconcerned by these dilemmas and perplexities related to the world and the body because it is aloof from both of them; the Atma has the grand virtue of equanimity towards everything as well as detachment from everything as its characteristic quality.]

A true Gyani is one who regards the 'he' (i.e. the eater) who eats the food as Brahm, and the 'food that is eaten' as also being Brahm in its form.

[Though this statement appears to be ridiculous and most absurd on the face of it but when understood its hidden meaning it becomes an obvious truth. The person who

eats the food is not the gross body known to the world as a certain Mr. X. The actual eater is the Atma, the 'true self' that resides in this body, and not the body itself, for if the body was the eater then even a dead body would eat food. The dead body does not eat, but it is the consciousness residing inside it as the Atma that keeps the body alive and enables it to eat anything. The Atma is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm that lives in the body of the eater known as Mr. X in the form of his 'true self'; if the Atma leaves the body the latter would be dead, and no dead body eats anything. Hence, the real 'eater' is not Mr. X who is conventionally recognized by his physical gross body, but the real 'eater' is the Atma that is Brahm (Consciousness) living inside the body of Mr. X.

The 'food eaten' also has two components—one that is its gross exterior features or aspects represented by its shape, texture, form, size and colour, and the other is the subtle aspect represented by the nutrients that the food contains. The gross part of the food is worthless as the body automatically eliminates it as stool and urine. It is the subtle part of food that is accepted by the body. This 'subtle' component of food is the basic quality and value of the food; it is what lends the food its energy, dynamism, importance and life-sustaining properties much like the Atma which lends the gross body of the creature its value and importance as well as its life, strength, dynamism, vitality and consciousness. A cow eats grass to produce milk which a woman does by eating everything else *but* grass!

Hence, the inherent basic life-sustaining virtues present in the food are symbolic forms of Brahm who is the 'life and consciousness' of the entire creation. Even as food is absolutely necessary for conception, sustenance and growth of all living beings in this creation, and no life is imaginable without the nutritional abilities of food, no life is tenable without Brahm (or 'consciousness') in this creation.

This visible creation has a gross form like the visible gross form of the food eaten. No one can actually see the nutritional components of the food—such as the various forms of minerals, trace elements, carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins etc.—that are present in it. Likewise, no one is able to see Brahm present uniformly everywhere in this creation.

Again, the scriptures have asserted that the entire creation is a revelation of Brahm, and this creation has a gross aspect that is visible, that has certain limitations and qualifications, that has a certain origin and an end. But the same scriptures have said in the same breath that Brahm is invisible, subtle, sublime, infinite, imperishable, boundless and limitless. So how do we reconcile these two apparent contradictions? Well, this is what makes Brahm so unique and one of its only kind. The truth is that Brahm is both the former as well as the latter—that is, Brahm is both the gross physical world that is visible and which has its own set of characteristics, as well as the invisible subtle world that is sublime and indefinable. It is so because 'everything without exception' is Brahm, and the phrase 'everything without exception' *includes* both the visible and grosser aspects of creation as well as the invisible and the subtle and sublime aspects! Nothing escapes Brahm; nothing in existence is Brahm-less.] (38).

39. An ascetic who has become Brahm-realised sees all the creatures as a form of Brahm. Therefore, the notion that distinguishes between two human beings, treating one as a Brahmin and the other as a Kshatriya, is meaningless for him. He accepts these artificial distinctions created in this world just like he eats even the grosser parts of the food (such

as solid food in the form of various edible roots, stems, leaves, vegetables, whole grain cereals etc., or liquids such as milk, fruit juice etc.), and then eliminates them from his system.

[That is, in order to live in this world he has to accept its norms just like in order to derive benefits from the nourishment contained in any food he has to eat its gross parts as well, because the vital nutrients contained in the food are hidden behind the gross form of the food. For instance, one eats the apple whole to derive benefit from the numerous vital nutritional elements that it contains. But once the nutritional elements are extracted by the body from the apple, the residual part of the fruit consisting of its grosser aspects are eliminated from the body as faecal matter and urine.

Similarly, a man has to interact with all kinds of people in this world; he cannot do without it. But a wise man is one who endeavours to benefit or learn from the auspicious and noble virtues that are present in all the categories of people to a lesser or greater degree. Just like the body extracting things that are of nutritional value from the food eaten and eliminating the rest, a wise man should pick up good and positive qualities from all those with whom he interacts in this world while rejecting their bad and negative qualities.

Further, he recognizes all individuals as one or the other form of Brahm—because he knows that the same Atma resides in their physical bodies which appear to be different from one another. It is just like the case of water contained in different containers of different shapes and sizes—the water assumes the contours of the vessel in which it is held but all the sample of water are the same in every respect, even chemically.

So, once a wise man has accepted all categories of people as Brahm personified, he gets rid of the artificial classifications that separate them into classes known as Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas etc. just like the case of the body ejecting the gross part of the food as stool and urine after the vital nutrients contained in the food have been extracted and absorbed in the system.] (39).

40. [Verse nos. 40-43 should be read together to understand their true import.]

A wise aspirant who knows Brahm as the Lord for whom ‘death’ is a sort of food (i.e. who brings about the end of everything in this creation; who has no fear from death; who outlives death as he is eternal and infinite; who vanquishes death which is so powerful and formidable that nothing escapes its jaws) also becomes one like Brahm (i.e. he too loses fear of death; he overcomes death).

[Everything in creation collapses into the primary source from where they had originated in the beginning much like waves in the ocean collapsing and merging into the water of the surface of the ocean from where they had emerged. ‘Death’ brings about the end of various units of creation at a given time, but ‘death’ itself is not free from the cycle of creation and destruction. A time would finally come when the Supreme Being would decide to wind up the creation, and then there would be no use of ‘death’ as nothing would be left to be ended, nothing would need to die. This means ‘death’ would become redundant, or that it would ‘die’ a natural death. This virtually translates into ‘death’ being devoured by Brahm, the paramount Authority of creation who now has no utility of ‘death’ when there is no creation that needs to be ended.

But this ‘Authority’ which empowers and authorizes ‘death’ to kill and end every unit of creation outlives the end of creation, because the said ‘Authority’ is eternal,

imperishable and infinite. That is why this 'Authority' is honoured by the epithet 'supreme and transcendental'.

So, when the spiritual aspirant becomes Brahm-realised he is transformed from being an ordinary living being to a personality that is Brahm personified himself. Hence, he acquires all the characteristics that are unique and typical of Brahm, including his fearlessness from death, his eternity and infinity. Being Brahm personified, the Brahm-realised person lasts even when everything else is finished in this creation. That is, he becomes eternal, imperishable and infinite like Brahm.]

With this eclectic and holistic vision of creation, the entire world becomes his 'food'—i.e. he begins to treat the whole world as the gross form within which lies its true worth, the 'truth' and 'acceptable essence' known as Brahm. He therefore regards the world as acceptable because it is a manifestation of Brahm, because it is through this world that he can easily recognize and access Brahm just like a wise man who accepts all forms or kinds of food (i.e. who eats a wide variety of food) so that he can derive the maximum benefit from the nutrition contained in all kinds of foods. He pays attention to the nutritional value of the food rather than its exterior form.

[Even as eating a wide variety of food is beneficial for the body as it allows the latter to get wholesome nutrition from a broad spectrum of sources, the wise man is one who interacts with all sorts of people in this world in order to learn something good and auspicious from them. He accepts the positive and rejects the negative.] (40).

41. When the world is known and accepted in its essential and primary form as the Atma (i.e. when one is wise enough to understand that the element that is worth paying attention to in this gross world is the 'consciousness' permeating everywhere in it because it is the only element that has breathed 'life' into the otherwise lifeless entity), the whole gross world is transformed into an acceptable entity in spite of its grossness, its shortcomings, its faults and its corruptions.

[Behind the exterior grossness lies the subtle 'truth' just like the instance of the most ordinary food having its own unique nutritional value and importance.

When one knows that the exterior form of the visible world hides the truthful and uncorrupted Atma inside it, he would not treat the world as something to be abhorred and abandoned. This statement has great practical importance in the sense that a wise man may live like an ordinary man in this world, enjoy its privileges and charms, but at the same time have total disregard to its gross and exterior form. Other ordinary persons might not understand the grand way he thinks and the high level of his intellectual standing, but they rather prefer to treat him as one like them. But this man is widely different from them, and he is not bothered by what they think of him. This is indeed the high water-mark of spiritual evolution that distinguishes a truly self and Brahm realised person, a person who can be rightly called wise and enlightened. Such a person has indeed understood the true meaning of the term non-duality, equanimity, dispassion, detachment, non-involvement and renunciation. What is the use of going to the forest as a reclusive hermit or an ascetic if one's mind remains hooked to the world left behind?]

Brahm, who is eternal and imperishable, constantly devours ('accepts') its own self (in the form of this visible world of which the Atma is the essence). In other words, 'Brahm continues to devour this world formed in his own image'.

[The text has the word 'Bhaksha' which literally means to eat or devour. But it does not mean to eat something in the conventional meaning of the term. It implies acceptance of something, taking out from it its essential element and then rejecting the gross and the worthless part just like one eats food, extracts its nutrients, and then ejects the gross and worthless part of the food eaten as stool and urine.

Brahm is an enlightened Being, so he would accept the 'truth' and not the falsehood. From the perspective of the enlightened man, this means that he accepts the world because it is an image of Brahm. Since a wise, enlightened and truly realised man is a personification or an image of Brahm, so when 'he' accepts the world in its true form as the Atma hidden in it, when he accepts the 'truth' that is sublime and absolute while rejecting or discarding the falsehood that is gross and meaningless, it is said that 'Brahm is accepting the world'.

Since such a man willingly grabs everything like a hungry man in order to learn something good and of positive virtue from whatever he can find, before judiciously rejecting the worthless and the gross, he is metaphorically said to be eating or devouring the world just like the case of a man eating all sorts of food items to extract their nutrition before rejecting the grosser part of the food as urine and stool.

From the perspective of the Atma, it means that it accepts the world as it is its own self. From the perspective of the Supreme Being, it means accepting its own creation which has no refuge except for him. And from the perspective of a wise man it means that he accepts all the good virtues present in all its various forms in this world of exceptional diversity, while rejecting the bad.

A wise and Brahm-realised man accepts things of value from this world and rejects what is worthless. But in order this to happen he would have to first accept the world before separating the grain from the chaff. He would have to 'eat' the food to gain nutrition from it. Merely looking at the food would not help him extract nutrition. So, a wise man needs to plunge into this ocean-like world to actually witness the magic of Brahm revealed in the form of the world and put on vivid display!

The assertion made in this verse that 'Brahm continues to devour this world formed in his own image' explains why the physical world continues to die in spite of the fact that it is said to be a visible revelation of the primarily invisible Brahm. 'Devouring' or 'eating' are symbolic terms and used in a metaphoric sense implying accepting something in its gross form only to extract its essence before rejecting its grosser aspects.

The concept of 'Brahm eating his own self' is further explained in verse no. 43 below.] (41).

42. When one becomes enlightened in the aforesaid manner the whole world is acceptable to him just like a hungry man who gladly eats anything that is available to him without bothering about its external appearances, its freshness, its taste and aroma, or whether the food has been properly purified or sanctified by following elaborate purification rituals.

Such an enlightened man treats the world as personification of the Atma or Brahm, and hence acceptable by all means. Such a broad and holistic vision of the world makes it worthy to be accepted and enjoyed and benefited from just like one accepts and enjoys and benefits from the food eaten by him.

[A wise and enlightened man disregards the gross aspects of the world around him, but rather treats it as manifestation of Brahm, the divine, holy and the perfect One. He accepts the world with its extremes of goodness and badness as a manifestation of Brahm, because Brahm is a term that includes ‘everything’ in creation, and the word ‘everything’ means just that—nothing escapes the parameter of the definition of Brahm, nothing is beyond Brahm; Brahm is invisible as well as visible; Brahm is an ubiquitous entity that is all-inclusive, all-encompassing and all-pervading; Brahm is an entity that permeates uniformly and universally in the entire creation, from the miniscule to the most colossal.

Therefore, if Brahm is invisible, subtle and sublime, then it is also visible, gross and ordinary simultaneously.] (42).

43. ‘Brahm devours his own self’ in a symbolic way. The primary reason of this highly paradoxical situation that appears to be incongruous and ridiculous on the face is that nothing exists in this creation that does not have Brahm at its core, or that does not represent one or the other aspect or virtue of Brahm, or that does not reflect Brahm in some way. Everything in existence, including the ‘eater’ and the ‘food eaten’, is a manifestation of Brahm like the rest of the creation. There is, in fact, nothing in this creation that is not Brahm!

[That is, both the thing that is eaten as well as the person who eats it are manifestations of Brahm. This deduction is based on the tenet of non-duality or ‘Advaitya’ which says that there is only one truth in creation, and therefore there cannot be two types of truths. Falsehood can be many, but truth is always one. Since Brahm is the quintessential ‘truth’ of creation, it naturally follows that (i) what ever that exists, such as the food that is eaten and the eater, are the same Brahm existing in these two forms, and (ii) to understand this apparently ridiculous proposition one has to have a well developed intellectual stature and spiritual evolvment.

For instance, it is only when one sees the earth from high up in the sky that one can understand the truth of the statement that the earth is not flat, but is a round ball-like structure hanging without any support in the fathomless void of space. For otherwise, if viewed from the surface, the same earth appears to be flat, with extremely high mountains that rise up to almost touch the sky on the one hand, or with deep chasms or canyons or furrows that go down in its seemingly depth-less bowls on the other hand. In fact, all these three things are true depending upon the level from which one views the earth.

Likewise, only those who have had acquired the depth of spiritual vision, the broadness of spiritual wisdom and a high level of spiritual enlightenment that enables one to see or understand something that is beyond the gross, the ordinary and the mundane aspects of creation, something that is supernatural and transcendental, can understand the true meaning of the statements associated with Brahm and the Atma. For the rest of the creatures, all these observations seem to be absurd and imaginary.]

The very fact that something exists is a proof of the existence of Brahm. Hence, both the eater and the food eaten are not only proofs of the existence of Brahm but also establishes that Brahm is the ‘eater’ as well as the entity that is ‘eaten’ (43).

44. Any Authority is established by its inherent and intrinsic dynamic powers, strength and potentials. When things are subjected to certain laws and regulations it is a sign that there is some Authority to control and regulate them. In other words, since the creation has an in-built regulatory mechanism that controls each and every phase of existence, it is too obvious to doubt that there is an invisible Authority that gives effect to this control and regulation mechanism. This 'Authority' is Brahm. Brahm and Authority are not separable from one another; they are synonymous with each other (just like a king and his royal authority are inseparable from one another and synonymous with each other).

Brahm is the 'Supreme Authority' in creation inasmuch there is no Authority beyond Brahm. Brahm is the only Authoritative Being in creation. Brahm is the Authority that has the power and the authority which are inviolable and sacrosanct. The fact is that there is no 'Authority' other than Brahm in this creation—and that makes Brahm 'supreme'.

It is also a fact that Maya (delusions) has no real existence. [Maya is an instrument in the hands of Brahm to exercise his authority over creation. It is Maya that helps Brahm to keep the wheel of creation rotating endlessly by keeping the creatures deluded and trapped. When the time comes for winding up the creation, Brahm exercises his 'authority' and removes the smokescreen of Maya. This smokescreen can also be voluntarily removed by Brahm-realised persons because they are themselves Brahm personified!] (44).

45. Wise ascetics realise that Maya is a voluntary creation of the Atma that resides in their inner-self.

[In other words, they realise that no one else is to blame for the web of delusions that they have created around themselves voluntarily. This is because their Atma is their truthful 'self', and it is this Atma that has created the Maya.]

However, this Maya and its negative and deluding effects are blocked by the knowledge of Brahm. It then appears only as a neutral entity that is as ineffective as an image or reflection seen in a mirror.

[In other words, those ascetics who are Brahm-realised are not affected by the negative influences of Maya. The latter seems to exist in this world because for the simple reason that the world exists, as without the Maya this world cannot exist. Maya and the artificial world go hand-in-hand; they co-exist. In other word, both the Maya and the world are imaginations of the mind; if the mind so decides, both would vanish. Maya has any relevance only till the time a man acknowledges the presence of the gross world—because the latter is a product of the former. But once he becomes enlightened enough to understand that the world is imaginary and therefore non-truth, it is a natural corollary that the relevance of the Maya is done away with. Instead of delusions, he begins to see the 'truth' everywhere. And this 'truth' is Brahm. Therefore, for a Brahm-realised person Maya ceases to exist, and with its cessation the world also ceases to exist.

This is all there is to Maya's importance and influence; it does not go any further than this point. It does not affect the inner-self of the wise ascetic who is freed from its cunning tricks, who understands that if he so determines he can easily overcome both the delusions and artificiality created by his imaginative mind.

This is why Brahm-realised and self-realised ascetics become enlightened and empowered enough that they can see the secret ‘truth’ in the same world in which other ordinary men cannot!

The reflection of any object that is seen in a mirror appears to be as true and real as the object itself, leading to so perfect a delusion that a man who does not know the real situation would begin to believe, after sometime, that the reflection or the image seen in the mirror is the object itself. This man forgets that what he sees is simply a ‘reflection or an image’ for the simple reason that the medium of seeing the object under question is a ‘mirror’ that has the grand virtue of creating a perfect image of the real thing.

When a wise man sees an image of an object in a mirror he immediately knows that there surely must be the object somewhere in the vicinity. So he looks around to find it, and then he is able to have a sight of the real thing. Say, is it not foolish to run behind the water seen in a mirage during a hot summer afternoon in desert even if one comes across a real source of water close at hand?

Therefore, is it not foolish to run behind the mirage-like world seeking peace and happiness when one knows that it is imaginary and misleading, as well as transient and perishable, instead of attempting to realise the ‘spiritual truth’ that would bestow him with peace and happiness that are not only everlasting but have depth and profundity as well.

The ‘image or the reflection’ seen in a mirror is never the real thing though it appears to be so. Similarly, when the supreme Truth (the cosmic Consciousness revealed in the form of ‘life’ in this creation) is seen against the background of Maya, it appears in the form of the visible gross world. When the same Truth is seen with the eyes of wisdom and enlightenment, it appears in the form of Brahm. Again, while the term ‘Brahm’ refers to the Truth at the macro level of creation, the same Truth is referred to as the ‘Atma’ when considered at the micro level of existence.

Hence, to conclude, a Brahm realised man sees this world as a reflection or an image of Brahm. It is in the mirror of existence that he sees Brahm being reflected. Therefore, even if the world is removed Brahm would still be there—just like the case of an object remaining in place even if the mirror that reflects its image is removed from sight.] (45).

46. In this way, a wise, enlightened and Brahm-realised spiritual aspirant who has acquired a holistic and truthful knowledge of Brahm sees this world that physically appears to be separate and distinct from him. Internally, he never treats it as a separate entity. Rather, he treats this entire world as his own reflection.

[This is because the world is a visible manifestation of Brahm, and the viewer himself is Brahm personified. So in effect it means that the world is his personal image. Or, that there is no difference between his ‘true self’ and the ‘truth of the world’. This implies that he is talking about the subtle aspects of the world rather than its gross aspects, for the subtle aspect is known as the Atma while the gross aspect is obviously caused by Maya, and therefore is not the reality. The subtle aspect of the viewer’s own self and the rest of the creatures is the same divine entity known as the Atma which is non-dual, and therefore they are the same, while the gross aspect is obviously different as each unit has its own gross features that are unique to it and different from the other unit.

For instance, if water is put into containers of different sizes, shapes and colours, none of them would ever change the basic nature, the basic qualities, the chemical formula etc. of water in the least. The water would always remain water irrespective of the vessel in which it is held.]

Verily, this is the great and the grand Truth that this great Upanishad proclaims. Amen! (46).

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3.8 Atharva Veda tradition's Neel Rudra Upanishad—

This is a minor Upanishad belonging to the Atharva Veda tradition, having three short Khandas or Cantos. It basically narrates the 'Raudra' (angry) form of Lord Shiva who is known as 'Neel-Kantha Rudra' because of the fact that his throat is permanently tinged purple or dark blue.

In the first Canto, prayer is made to Lord Rudra to shed aside his angry form, and instead adopt a form which is calm, pleasing and auspicious.

In the second Canto, it is visualized that Lord Rudra is in the affectionate form of Gopal, one of the names of Lord Krishna, who is bewitching with the trademark peacock's feather stuck in the lock of hairs on his head. Rudra is also said to be Indra, the king of Gods. This Canto also narrates the most potent weapons of Rudra in his form as Indra because the latter needed these weapons to rule over this world.

And finally, Canto three narrates the 'Neel-Kanth' form of Rudra, or the form of Lord Shiva with a dark-blue tinged throat. This colour of the throat shows that the Lord is so merciful that he did not care about his own welfare but gulped the 'Halaal poison', the most corroding and fierce poison that was produced at the time of the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal life and bliss.

Neel Kanth Rudra or Shiva with the blue/purple throat is also known by other names, such as Kedareshwar (the Lord of Kedar, the mountainous abode of Shiva), Virupaksha (the Lord with three eyes, hence looking most unconventional) etc.

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Khanda/Section/Canto 1

1-3. Oh Lord 'Neel Griva' (i.e. the Lord with a blue or purple throat)! We visualize you coming down on earth from your divine abode in the high heaven. We have a divine vision of your cosmic form that is known as 'Rudra', literally the form that is most awe-inspiring, foreboding, formidable, furious, angry and uncompromising. This magnificent and most enigmatic cosmic form of yours bears the 'Antariksha' (the vast and fathomless recesses of the sky) on its head as if it was a crown adorned with a peacock's feather tucked in it. This is because you are the Lord of the earth (mortal creation) who bears this

crown of the sky on your head. [This is the cosmic form of Brahm revealed in the form of Rudra.]

Oh human beings! Have a divine sight of Lord Neel-Griva with a reddish countenance.

Lord Rudra enters water and medicinal herbs as their magnificent ability to fight and defeat (cure) diseases. It is the Lord's desire to give protection to his subjects (creation)—by slaying (eliminating; destroying) formidable enemies in the form of countless diseases afflicting the creatures of this world—that has manifested itself as the dynamic curative powers that are inherently present in the water and medicinal plants which enable them to fight the menace of various diseases representing the evil consequences of sins and misdeeds of the creature.

[Diseases are caused by strong evil forces of Nature that are so powerful that they are able to overcome the resistance offered by the Gods who symbolically live in subtle forms in the body of the living being. Therefore if these evil forces are to be defeated then a force stronger than these evil conquering forces is needed. This countering force is represented by Lord Rudra who is the most powerful form of the Supreme Being as far as enforcing order and punishing the guilty is concerned.

Diseases are cured by the medicinal qualities of the various herbs as well as the ability of water to become a medium by which the curative ingredients of the herbs are transported to the various tissues of the body so that the negative forces that have created the disease can be nullified and dispensed with. The water then helps to eliminate the toxin left behind by the retreating enemy (representing the disease-causing factors) from the body, thereby restoring the general health and well-being of the Gods who were suffering previously.

Thus, Lord Rudra in this sense represents the formidable strength of Brahm, the Supreme Being, to overcome negative or evil factors of creation, and protect life that is being tormented by such factors.]

The Lord (Rudra), therefore, is a provider of solace and succour to all the living beings; the Lord is the basis and foundation upon which life rests in this world.

Let the Lord (Neel-Griva; Shiva; Rudra) arrive in our midst to end all our misfortunes, inconveniences, troubles and miseries, and instead provide us with all the conveniences, all the things and all the means that are conducive for our welfare and well-being which are not available to us or are beyond our reach at the present. [1-3].

[Note—One must clearly see the paradox of the situation—and the fact that the same Lord plays different roles, as well as the fact that the same action or deed can acquire different meanings under different set of conditions.

Lord Rudra is that form of the Supreme Being which brings about conclusion of creation. But when it becomes necessary to use the same ferocity, the same strength and the same power that the Lord employs to bring about the conclusion of creation in a swift move for the welfare of the same creation that he concludes, the Lord does not hesitate for a second. This explains the idea of the curative properties of the medicines and herbs as being personifications of Lord Rudra—these herbs and medicines have to fight formidable negative forces of Nature that bring about destruction and ruin in the form of various diseases. So the curative properties of herbs represent Rudra with all his potentials and powers employed to give protection to the creature instead of employing these potentials and powers to bring about death and destruction. For once, Lord Rudra plays the role of a sustainer and protector of creation like Vishnu, instead of being its concluder and annihilator.]

4-5. We bow most reverentially to Lord Bhava (Shiva; Rudra) who has an angry and formidable form.

We bow to Isha (Lord) who has two arms that hold arrows (and a bow).

Oh the Lord of the Holy Mountain (i.e. Kailash, the mountainous abode of Shiva). You provide auspiciousness, happiness and benediction to, and look after the welfare and ensure the well-being of all the living beings on this earth (i.e. on the vast stretches of the plains where the majority of the creatures live) though you live far away on the mountain.

Oh Lord Shiva who is known as 'Giritra' (the protector of mountains and their inhabitants)! The arrow that you hold for the destruction and the vanquishing of the wicked and evil ones—let the same arrow provide us humans with its protection, benediction and reassurance. Do not harm our kith and kin with it; let us humans be spared from the wrath of your arrow. [4-5].

6-7. Oh Lord Shiva who is honoured as the 'Isha' (Lord of creation) as well as the 'Girish' (the Lord of the Mountains; the Lord who has his divine abode in the mountains)! We sing your divine glories with all sincerity and devotion that our voice and words can command. With this song, the whole world around us becomes free from all miseries and misfortunes, and instead becomes favourable and helpful for us.

Your bow, its string and your arrow—all of them provide reassurance and auspiciousness to us. [That is, instead of feeling any sort of fear by their menacing presence, we feel reassured and happy that they are there to afford us with all-round protection and loving care against all evil forces of creation.]

Oh Lord Shiva who is also known as Lord Mrida! You are an image of auspiciousness, benediction and munificence. Provide our lives with all your arms and armaments.

[In other words, you are our patron deity. So whenever we are in distress and pain and need your help, you must come forward immediately with all your might to support us like an Emperor who makes all his armory and army available to his subjects when they need them for their protection against enemies.] [6-7].

8-9. Oh Lord Rudra Shiva! In spite of living high up and away in the mountains you still are eager in providing for and ensuring our welfare and happiness.

Provide us with light and illumination from all sides with your auspicious, divine and holy form that is benevolent and munificent as well as a vanquisher and eliminator of sins.

The numerous forms of yours that exist in all the different directions, forms that are of a copper colour, of a reddish hue, of a grey colour, of deep red colour like that of rusted iron as well as thousands of other forms that are as glorious, dynamic, radiant and splendid as thousands of the rays of the sun—we sincerely invoke them and offer our prayerful respects to all of them when we sing the hymns in your (Rudra Shiva's) honour.

[This stanza has two possible inferences. One is that it refers to the numerous forms as Gods, or even Lord Shiva in his different forms having different names, in which the same Supreme Being is worshipped in this creation. Another inference is that all the creatures with numerous complexions and countenances that live in this world are

actually an image of the same Supreme Being who exists in as many forms. The worshipper offers his respects to all of them.] [8-9].

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Kanda/Section/Canto 2

1-2. Oh Lord Neel-Griva (the Lord with a blue/purple throat; Shiva) who has a red complexion! We have had the good fortune of sighting your divine and glorious form as it descended upon the earth from heaven.

That divine and most enigmatic form of yours was seen by the cowherds (of Vrindavan), the milkmaids as well as all other living beings in this world.

[This stanza means that Lord Rudra Shiva was the one who had manifested as Lord Krishna of Vrindavan. Krishna is the Lord whose incarnation has been described in detail in the epic Puran known as Srimad Bhagwat. This has a great significance because Krishna is universally regarded as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation, and not of Rudra. Hence, the present Upanishad establishes that Vishnu and Rudra are the same Supreme Being known as Brahm in two different forms and having two separate names.

There is another very pertinent and important implication here. Vishnu is the universal protector and sustainer of creation, and not its slayer or killer. This latter role is that of Shiva in his fierce form as Rudra. Now, when we look closely we discover that Lord Krishna performed both these roles—on the one hand he offered his protection to the humble cowherds of Mathura and Vrindavan against the tyranny of his maternal uncle Kansha who was demonic in his temperament and nature, a role specific of Vishnu, and on the other hand Krishna had ruthlessly killed fierce demons with his bare hands, even as a child, without employing any weapon, something that only Rudra can achieve.

It is thus evident that Krishna embodied in his divine body the combined forms of Vishnu of whom he is usually regarded as being an incarnation, as well as of Rudra as proved by this Upanishad. Krishna combined in him the cosmic powers of Vishnu as well as Rudra.

When we compare Lord Krishna with Lord Ram who is another incarnation of Vishnu, we find a stark difference. Lord Ram had never killed any demon with his 'bare hands' like Krishna had done. Ram had always employed his arrows to slay the demons. Now, the question arises 'what form did Rudra take during the incarnation of Vishnu as Ram?' Well, the answer is 'Hanuman', the monkey-faced warrior devotee of the Lord who was instrumental in the Lord's slaying of the ferocious demons led by their king Ravana of Lanka.]

We reverentially bow before this glorious and divine form of the Lord (Rudra Shiva as Krishna).

Oh the Lord who wears the blue feather of the peacock (tucked in the lock of hairs) on his head (as a tiara)! [This has clear reference to Lord Krishna.] We bow most reverentially before you¹.

It is you who has revealed himself as 'Sahastraaksha' (literally the one with a thousand eyes; here meaning Indra, the king of Gods) who is most powerful and strong.

Actually, Indra represents that cosmic form of yours which reveals it's self before your devotees with thousands of eyes.

[This stanza refers to the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. This form is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm from which the rest of the creation has emerged. All the creatures are deemed to be microcosmic images of this Viraat Purush. The term 'thousands of eyes' is a figure of speech to imply that all living beings that have eyes—i.e. the creatures who can see—have the same Brahm residing in their gross bodies as their 'true self' known as the Atma.

It also means that the Lord sees everything everywhere, and nothing is hidden or secret from his eyes.] [1-2].

3-4. This divine form of yours that has a gross visible aspect and which is accompanied by cowherds and milkmaids with clean minds and hearts—we offer our obeisance to it, we bow before it.

We offer our repeated respects to, and we repeatedly bow before, all your arms and armaments that are very potent and powerful but are not being used by you at the moment. We bow before your formidable and powerful bow with folded hands.

Unfasten the string of your bow (i.e. deactivate this powerful weapon) and become neutral in relation to the creatures whom you had wished to protect with this bow as well as the creatures whom you had wished to punish and kill. That is, please become calm and graceful; please eliminate the chances of war, strife, violence, hatred, ill-will and animosity. [Let there be peace and tranquility along with happiness and brotherhood everywhere in this world.] [3-4].

5-6. Oh the Lord with thousand eyes who wears the peacock feather! Return the arrow in your hand to its quiver. You can mount hundreds of arrow on your formidable bow simultaneously. For our welfare and happiness as well as granting protection to us from our enemies, sharpen the tip of your arrow and mount it on your bow.

Once all our fears are dispelled and enemies vanquished, unfasten the string of your bow. Let the arrow abandon its natural habit of inflicting horror and torment (on the evil and wicked ones), and instead return calmly to its quiver. [Let there be peace and tranquility everywhere.] [5-6].

7. Let your most potent and powerful arrow that is so sharp that it easily pierces through huge mountains return to its quiver. [7].

8. Let your arrow that is mounted on the bow give us protection from all sides. Once this aim is achieved, return the arrow to the quiver. [8].

9. Oh Lord who is most merciful and benevolent! Protect us from all sides with your arrow that is formidable, indestructible and invincible, along with its companion, the bow.

We bow with respects to all the serpents (or all those creatures who inflict unnecessary miseries and torments upon others) that live on the surface of earth. [That is, we pay our obeisance to them and request them to spare us from their wrath, to grant us immunity from their bite as well as from all kinds of miseries and troubles they can cause

for us. Since Lord Shiva is also regarded as the Lord of serpents as is evident from his image that shows him wearing serpents as garlands, arm-bands, head-gear etc., in this verse he is requested to grant protection to the worshipper from snake bite.] [9].

10-11. We bow to all the serpents (and other malicious creatures) who live in the sky as well as in the heaven. [This refers to all unfavourable stars, gods, spirits etc. that may create unnecessary problems for the worshipper.]

We bow to all the serpents (representing all evil and tormenting forces of Nature) that live in those worlds that are illuminated, as well as those that live in the rays of the sun and in water.

We bow to all the serpents that represent the arrows of demons (or of demonic, evil and wicked forces of creation) that live in crevices, furrows and holes as well as in trees, plants, shrubs and twigs etc. [10-11].

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Khanda/Section/Canto 3

1. The Lord (Shiva)—who is known as ‘Neel Griva’ (one with a blue/purple throat) because he had drunk the corrosive and fierce poison (known as ‘Halaal’ that had emerged when the ocean was being churned by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss) to protect his subjects (creatures of this creation; or his devotees) from being scorched and scalded by its ferocity—is the same Lord who has also manifested as Lord Hari (Vishnu) who is the universal sustainer, protector and nourisher of the same subjects (creatures; devotees) of this creation.

[In other words, both the forms of the Lord, as Neel Griva or Neel Kantha as well as Hari or Vishnu, have one aim in mind, and it is to grant protection to this creation. Hence, Shiva and Vishnu are the same; there is no difference or dichotomy between them.]

Oh medicinal plants and herbs! Be quickly empowered with stupendous strength, energy, dynamism and vitality for the purpose of serving the one who has a black tail (i.e. the bull known as Nandi, which is the mount of Lord Shiva).

[This prayer is meant for the plants and the green grass upon which Nandi, the bull which is Lord Shiva’s mount, depends for its food. If the mount is well-fed, healthy, energetic and active, the master too would get immense happiness and pleasure when he sees it well-fed, healthy, happy and contented. Besides this emotional aspect, when the devotee ever needs the help of the Lord, it is this mount known as Nandi with the black tail that would bring Shiva to his aid. A healthy and well-fed bull is therefore most desirable as far as extending instant protection to this creation against evil forces is concerned where intercession of Lord Shiva is needed quickly.] [1].

2. The Lord known as Neel Griva (i.e. Shiva) has a blue/purple throat but the complexion of the rest of his body, including the ears, is fair¹. [Special reference is made of the ‘ear’ to highlight the fact that the blue or purple colour of the throat has not at all affected the Lord’s face and its parts, such as the ear.]

The Lord is all-pervading, all-encompassing and omnipresent. He is manifested or revealed in all forms in which this vast and multifarious world exists. [There is nothing that is not Lord Shiva.]

It is this Lord known as the Neel Kantha (i.e. the Lord with a blue/purple throat) who is the father of the Wind God known as Marut. [2].

[Note—¹It will be noted that here his complexion is said to be 'fair' while earlier in Canto 2, verse no. 1-2 it has been described as being 'red coloured'. Well, there is no confusion if we take a broader and holistic look at what the colour of Rudra stands for. Canto 1, verse nos. 8-9 emphasizes the cosmic form of Lord Rudra is like the rays of the Sun, and the sunlight is known to consist of different shades of colours though overall it appears to be white.

The 'red' colour is associated with anger, while the 'white' colour is associated with peace that comes with enlightenment and wisdom. So, the form of Rudra with red colour was when he took the decision to get rid of the evil forces represented by the demons when the Lord manifested as Krishna as mentioned in Canto 2, while he assumed a white colour when he manifested as Shiva, the enlightened Lord with the third eye of wisdom as mentioned in the present Canto 3.]

3. It is this Lord with unconventional (odd) set of (three) eyes who slays or kills (i.e. trounces, eliminates or destroys) those who speak arrogantly and haughtily (i.e. those who are proud and egoistic, those who are boastful and pretentious, those who are arrogant of their strength and valour, are crushed or punished by Lord Shiva).

[Lord Shiva has three eyes, two normal eyes like all human forms, and one odd eye located in the middle of the eyebrows above the nose. This third eye gives Shiva a most odd, awe-inspiring and unconventional appearance. This third eye is however what makes Shiva so unique—it is called the eye of wisdom and enlightenment. It is here that the Agya Chakra, the whirling center of energy that opens the window of enlightenment, wisdom and knowledge in the creature, is located. That is why Shiva is regarded as the most wise and enlightened God amongst them all.

Since the Lord is highly self-realised, enlightened and wise, he is deemed to be an enemy of, or inimical to such negative character traits as pride, ego, arrogance, haughtiness etc. that are symbolized by the term 'speaking loudly' which means speaking boastfully and pretentiously. The Lord does not tolerate loud-mouthed people who are arrogant, haughty, boastful and deceitful. He immediately brings them to book.]

Oh brave people! One must always see him playing a subtle role in all deeds and actions. One must realise that it is the universal Lord who is the doer of all deeds.

[That is, one must not be boastful of one's achievements, but be humble and soft-spoken instead. One must do deeds dispassionately as if one is simply carrying out the Lord's orders. One must realise that it is the Supreme Being living inside the body as the Atma and Pran that enables the gross and inane body to do anything, and nothing can be done if the Supreme Being does not wish it to be done. So there is no ground and locus standi for being arrogant, haughty, boastful, pretentious and loud-mouthed.] [3].

4. One should discard all doubts and confusions about him (i.e. the Lord known as Neel Griva, i.e. Lord Shiva); one should abandon all inclination to enquire about the Lord and verify his authenticity and divinity.

It is out of ignorance and its attendant delusions that we treat the world as being separate and different from him; this is a completely erroneous notion. [This is because Lord Neel Griva is none but the supreme transcendental Brahm himself, and it is this Brahm who has not only created this world out of his own being but also pervades throughout it uniformly, completely soaking it from all sides. This world is but a visible and qualified image of Brahm that is otherwise invisible and unqualified.]

We bow most reverentially to Lord Bhava (who is the cause for this creation coming into being).

We bow most reverentially to the Lord (known as Rudra) who is the annihilator and concluder of everything that exists in this creation.

We bow most reverentially to the Lord who appeared as a young groom at the marriage venue in the city of Daksha Prajapati (his earlier father-in-law) where his presence lent great glory, beauty, glamour, magnificence and majesty to the auspicious occasion, and gave immense contentedness, joy and happiness to the assembly. [The occasion was Lord Shiva's marriage with Sati, the daughter of Daksha Prajapati.]

It is from this Lord Neel Griva in his form as the divine Bull (known as the Nandi) that horses, donkeys and all those four-footed creatures who run around (roam) here and there on this earth came into being.

We bow most reverentially to this Lord Neel Griva, i.e. the Lord with the blue throat, who wears the blue-tinged feather of the peacock on his head.

We once again bow most reverentially to Lord Neel Griva, i.e. the Lord with the blue throat, who wears the blue-tinged feather of the peacock on his head. [4].

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Lord Shiva-Book 2

The Legend of Lord Shiva:

The Maha-Deva and The Great God

(Lord Shiva's Glories, Legends, Shiva-Puran & Upanishads)

CHAPTER 4

Importance of having Bhakti (devotion) for Lord Shiva

Tulsidas' immortal epic story of Lord Ram, known as *Ram Charit Manas*, highly respects Lord Shiva. In it, Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, has said himself that if one wishes to have 'Bhakti' (devotion) for the Lord, then it is necessary for him to have great respect of Lord Shiva—reference: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45; and Lanka Kand, Doha no. 2 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8, till Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 3.

Now, let us read these fine verses one by one.

4.1 Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45—

दो०. औरउ एक गुपुत मत सबहि कहउँ कर जोरि ।
संकर भजन बिना नर भगति न पावइ मोरि ॥ ४५ ॥

dōhā.

aura'u ēka guputa mata sabahi kaha'um̐ kara jōri.
saṅkara bhajana binā nara bhagati na pāva'i mōri. 45.

There is one more secret I must tell you all with all the humility I can gather. Without adoring Lord Shiva, invoking his holy name and worshipping him earnestly, one cannot have (or expect success in having) devotion for me. (Doha no. 45)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, there are specific verses that reiterate this declaration of Lord Ram—(i) Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede this Doha no. 2

This is an important caveat included by the Lord. Earlier also, in Ram Charit Manas, 6/2/3—6/3/4, Lord Ram has asserted that he himself has the greatest respect for Lord Shiva, that if a man hopes to have devotion for the Lord (Ram) without worshipping Lord Shiva first then he goes to hell and is a complete dud, and that anyone who says that he is dear to Lord Shiva and inimical to me (Lord Ram) and vice versa then such a person goes to fall in a fierce heaven to suffer for one Kalpa (a very long period of time, equivalent to 1 day of Brahma the creator, which are equal to 432×10^7 earthly years approximately).

The context of this assertion was Lord Ram's consecration of Lord Shiva's Lingam (symbolic idol) on the shores of the ocean and worshipping Shiva before Lord Ram embarked on his mission to defeat and eliminate the cruel demons from Lanka. He decided to invoke Lord Shiva's blessings for this great enterprise.

Lord Shiva is no ordinary God; he is known as 'Mahadeva'—the great Lord God. He is also known as 'Ishan' or the symbol of Isha, the Supreme Being. He is a personified form of bliss and renunciation that comes with self-realisation, enlightenment and a constant state of Samadhi (a trance-like of transcendental existence) attained in higher reaches of meditation and contemplation. He is an embodiment of Truth and its beauty.

This exceptional adoration for Lord Shiva in the heart of Lord Ram is not unilateral, for Shiva also enshrines Lord Ram in his heart, and constantly repeats Lord Ram's holy Name, known as the 'Tarka Mantra', a spiritual formula that provides deliverance to the creature's soul from the cycle of transmigration.

These facts have been expressly and clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas at the following places in Baal Kand—

(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52 where Lord Shiva tells his divine consort Parvati or Uma that "Raghubir (Lord Ram) is my sole revered deity; I adore him as my Lord God; Lord Ram is the one who is constantly served by wise and enlightened sages and seers".

(ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19 where it is asserted that "Lord Shiva constantly repeats (does Japa) the great Mantra of Lord Ram, and uses this mystically empowered divine formula to provide Mukti (liberation and deliverance) to the dying creature at Kasi (the pilgrim city of Varanasi, which is famous as the site for cremation of the dead so that their souls find liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death".

(iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 19 where it is asserted that "Lord Shiva knows the immense importance of Lord Ram's holy name because it is on the strength of its life-giving and life-sustaining powers, and its ability to neutralize all the evil affects of poisons, both physical as well as symbolic, that he managed to gulp the horrible poison, known as the 'Kaal Kut', that emerged from the celestial ocean at the time of its churning in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity, by the gods and the demons in some ancient time".

(iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26 where it is declared that "It is as a divine blessing of Lord Ram's holy name that Lord Shiva is regarded as a fount and treasury of all auspiciousness and holiness inspite of his body being adorned and surrounded by unholy things (such as being covered by ash, being wrapped by coiled serpents, remaining almost naked like an ascetic, and living in the cremation ground to do meditation and provide Mukti to dying creatures).

(v) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35 where it is said that "the divine story of Lord Ram, known as the 'Ram Charit Manas', was first revealed in the heart of Lord Shiva".

(vi) Chaupai line no. 36 that precedes Doha no. 1 where Tulsidas assert that "the Ram Charit Manas emerged in his own heart as a blessing of Lord Shiva".

(vii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 50 where it is narrated how Uma, the divine consort of Shiva, was extremely perplexed when she saw that Lord Shiva had reverentially bowed his head before Lord Ram though Shiva himself is so exalted and a senior God in creation that the entire world bows its head before him.

In another great legendary narration of Lord Ram's divine story, the famous 'Adhyatma Ramayan' by sage Veda Vyas, the legendary classifier of the Vedas and the author of the Purans, it is stated that after being crowned as the king of Ayodhya, Lord Ram had established countless numbers of Shiva Lingams in his kingdom—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 27.]

4.2 Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 2 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8, till Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 3—

When the bridge across the ocean was ready and Lord Ram was about to embark on his military campaign to land on the soil of Lanka with his majestic and vast army not only to free his wife Sita from the captivity of the demon king Ravana but also to eliminate, with freeing Sita as an obvious excuse, the cruel and sinful demons from the world so that the rest of the creatures can live fearlessly in peace and harmony, and the laws of Dharma can be restored, he decided to offer his worship to Lord Shiva and pay his obeisance to the latter.

Before launching any enterprise it is necessary and prudent to offer one's respects and worship to one's chosen deity to invoke the latter's blessing, good wishes and patronage. Lord Shiva is not only the revered God of the whole world in general as he is the 'Maha-Deva', the 'Great God', but is also the God revered by Lord Ram himself, as well as the patron God of Ram's arch enemy and rival Ravana, the king of Lanka and of the demon race.

So therefore, Lord Ram offered his worship to Lord Shiva before he stepped on the bridge to launch his campaign for the conquest of Lanka. It was on this occasion that Lord Ram praised Shiva and declared that if anyone wants to have devotion for him (Ram as an incarnation of the Supreme Being) then it is ordained upon him to first offer his respects and worship to Lord Shiva.

देखि सेतु अति सुंदर रचना । बिहसि कृपानिधि बोले बचना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi sētu ati sundara racanā. bihasi kṛpānidhi bōlē bacanā. 2.

When Lord Ram watched the beautifully constructed bridge over the mighty ocean, the Lord who is like a treasury of grace, kindness, mercy and compassion smiled and said—
(2)

परम रज्य उत्तम यह धरनी । महिमा अमित जाइ नहिं बरनी ॥ ३ ॥

parama ramya uttama yaha dharanī. mahimā amita jā'i nahim baranī. 3.

'The land here is excellent, being extremely charming and auspicious. It is not possible to easily describe its astounding glories that are countless and measureless. (3)

करिहउँ इहाँ संभु थापना । मोरे हृदयँ परम कलपना ॥ ४ ॥

kariha'um' ihām' sambhu thāpanā. mōrē hṛdayam' parama kalapanā. 4.

Let me establish Lord Shambhu (Shiva) here (in the form of his Lingam). I have a great desire in my heart to do so.' (4)

सुनि कपीस बहु दूत पठाए । मुनिबर सकल बोलि लै आए ॥ ५ ॥

sunī kapīsa bahu dūta paṭhā'ē. munibara sakala bōli lai ā'ē. 5.

When the king of monkeys (Sugriv) heard this, he sent many messengers to inform all the sages of this auspicious occasion, and request them to come forthwith (because there was no time to be lost). So, the messengers went quickly and brought all the sages there. (5)

लिंग थापि बिधिवत करि पूजा । सिव समान प्रिय मोहि न दूजा ॥ ६ ॥

liṅga thāpi bidhivata kari pūjā. siva samāna priya mōhi na dūjā. 6.

Lord Ram established and consecrated a Shiva Lingam at that place, and duly worshipped the Lord. Then Lord Ram declared—'No one is dearer to me than Shiva. (6)

सिव द्रोही मम भगत कहावा । सो नर सपनेहुँ मोहि न पावा ॥ ७ ॥

siva drōhī mama bhagata kahāvā. sō nara sapanēhum' mōhi na pāvā. 7.

If a person is inimical or opposed to Shiva and claims to be my devotee, then let this one thing be clear—such a person will never find access to me even in his dreams. (7)

संकर बिमुख भगति चह मोरी । सो नारकी मूढ़ मति थोरी ॥ ८ ॥

saṅkara bimukha bhagati caha mōrī. sō nārakī mūṛha mati thōrī. 8.

Expecting to have devotion (Bhakti) for me (and hoping to be successful in it and be able to please me) and be opposed to or be inimical to Shiva—well, such a person is utterly stupid and ignorant, and he heads (goes) to hell. (8)

दो०. संकरप्रिय मम द्रोही सिव द्रोही मम दास ।

ते नर करहिँ कलप भरि घोर नरक महुँ बास ॥ २ ॥

dōhā.

saṅkarapriya mama drōhī siva drōhī mama dāsa.
tē nara karahim kalapa bhari ghōra naraka mahum' bāsa. 2.

Remember—a person who claims to be dear to Shiva while being inimical or opposed to me, and vice-versa, is sure to live and suffer in the gravest of hells for one full Kalpa (era—i.e. for a very long time). (Doha no. 2)

चौ०. जे रामेस्वर दरसन करिहहिं । ते तनु तजि मम लोक सिधरिहहिं ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

jē rāmēsvara darasanu karihahim. tē tanu taji mama lōka sidharihahim. 1.

A person who comes and has a divine Darshan (holy seeing; comes to visit and pay his respects to; worships) Lord ‘Rameshwar’ established by me here, he is able to go to my divine abode in the heaven (i.e. the abode of Lord Vishnu who has incarnated in the form of Lord Ram) when he leaves his mortal body (at the time of death). (1)

[Note—The Lingam of Lord Shiva established and consecrated by Lord Ram on the shores of the ocean is named after Ram. The word ‘Rameshwar’ has two-pronged meaning—one is ‘the Lord who is the Ishwar or God of Lord Ram, the deity who is worshipped and adored by Ram’, and the other meaning is ‘the Lord, i.e. Shiva, who regards Lord Ram as his Ishwar or Lord God’.

This is an extremely important observation—as it removes in one intelligent stroke the schism and dichotomy that has led to the delusion of ‘duality’ between the two facets of the same Divinity. In other words, it lays stress on the fact that there is absolutely no difference between Lord Ram and Lord Shiva—they are both the same Supreme Being performing two different roles, to sustain and protect the creation as Vishnu or Ram, and to bring about its conclusion and punish the sinful as Shiva.

This obvious metaphysical tenet is at the base of the principle of Non-duality or Advaita Vedanta, and is evident also in fact that both Lord Ram and Shiva worship each other.

There is no other God or non-God in creation who is more well-versed in and more convinced of the spiritual philosophy of non-duality, as well as the fact that Lord Ram’s divine name ‘Ram’ is a synonym of the cosmic word-symbol for the supreme Brahm, i.e. ‘OM’, than Lord Shiva. It this reason why Shiva had selected the divine name ‘Ram’ as his spiritual formula—both for his personal usage during meditation and for providing liberation and deliverance to the dying man by muttering the holy word ‘Ram’ into his ears at Kashi or Varanasi. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, 1/19/3; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4.]

जो गंगाजलु आनि चढ़ाइहि । सो साजुज्य मुक्ति नर पाइहि ॥ २ ॥
jō gaṅgājalu āni carḥā’ihi. sō sājujya mukti nara pā’ihi. 2.

A person who brings the water of the holy river Ganges (from the Himalayas or the northern plains of India where this river flows) and offers it to this Lingam here (at Rameshwaram) is able to find a form of liberation known as ‘Sayujya Mukti’. (2)

[Note—In the ‘Sayuja form of Mukti, the concerned creature is able to become one with the deity worshipped. In other words it means to merge oneself with the Lord God.

References: Atharva Veda’s Tripadvibhut Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, paragraph nos. 3-17; Canto 6, paragraph no. 22; Canto 8, paragraph nos. 6-7, 17, 19, 22. While discussing this specialised form of Mukti, this Upanishad also describes the eclectic concept of Mukti in a comprehensive form in paragraph nos. 4-13 of Canto 5. In the Bhasma Jabal

Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto 2, paragraph no. 15, Lord Shiva tells sage Jabal Bhusund that if one offers proper worship to the Shiva Lingam as described in detail in this particular Upanishad, the worshipper is able to obtain Sayujya Mukti.]

होइ अक्काम जो छल तजि सेइहि । भगति मोरि तेहि संकर देइहि ॥ ३ ॥

hō'i akāma jō chala taji sē'ihī. bhagati mōri tēhi saṅkara dē'ihī. 3.

A person who serves the Lord (Shiva) selflessly and honestly, without any pretensions and deceit, is granted my Bhakti (devotion, faith and affection) by Shiva himself. [In other words, the auspicious reward of worshipping and offering service to Lord Shiva is obtaining Bhakti for Lord Ram. This is in consonance with the declaration made in the Upanishads cited above.]' (3)

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

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